

The University of Chicago

THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS IN  
ENGLISH LITERATURE  
1519-1798

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE  
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
AND LITERATURE

1937

By  
CLARA REBECCA LESH~~ER~~

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## CHAPTER II

### THE HEIGHT OF THE ISLANDERS' POPULARITY

1764-1780

With the establishment of peace by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, a new period of geographical discovery in the South Pacific began. No longer were voyages to the South Seas merely commercial, incidental to privateering adventures, or parts of voyages around the world. Dalrymple's dream was to be realized; the English and French governments and several scientific societies began to encourage and even to outfit ships whose chief purpose was exploration--to discover and bring back accurate information about the location, boundaries, flora, and fauna of the great southern continent and the South Sea Islands. Nor was man to be overlooked in these observations. Account after account reveals the belief that the study of man as he appeared far from contact with European civilization was regarded as an important duty of a navigator.

It is not surprising that with changes in motive there should be a corresponding change in the personnel of the expeditions. Scientists and artists--trained observers--were now important members. As a result, the accounts of the voyages are, for the first time, filled with details of native life and beliefs which soon enabled the average reader to speak as knowingly of South Sea life as of life in Germany or in Italy.

The first of the voyages in the period was that of Commodore John Byron (1764-66), who had sailed with Anson twenty years earlier. Before the official account of this voyage had appeared, an anonymous writer, purporting to have been an officer on one of Byron's ships, took advantage of the public interest in the South Seas and published his account.<sup>1</sup> In this narrative we meet again descriptions of friendly and unfriendly savages<sup>2</sup> differing little

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<sup>1</sup>A voyage round the world, in His Majesty's ship the Dolphin . . . . By an officer on board the said ship (London, 1767).

<sup>2</sup>See, for instances of friendliness, *ibid.*, pp. 88, 92, 104, 130-31, 136; of unfriendliness, *ibid.*, pp. 124-25, 127.



from the long line of such descriptions from Magellan to Anson. But there is also a new note, one which was to become as usual in the late eighteenth-century voyage accounts as it was unusual in the earlier ones.

No visitor to the South Seas had failed to be impressed with the natives' constant stealing. And from Magellan on, few had neglected to record the habit. But here, for the first time, we find a slight attempt to explain it. "These Indians seem to have no notion even of those points, which, one would think, nature must have informed them of, without the assistance of the laws formed by polite nations for the advantage of civil society; but it is probable that they enjoy all things in a manner in common amongst themselves, and thence have little idea of property with respect to others."<sup>3</sup> Hesitant as this explanation is, it is important in the history of primitivism for it strikes at one of the central problems. Is the moral sense innate; do we find it in its purest state in uncultivated societies, or is it developed and seen to best advantage in highly civilized countries? There were to be many attempts in the next few decades to answer these questions as they arose in connection with the South Sea Islanders.

After the publication of this account, public interest in the South Seas began to mount. The periodicals from 1767 on are filled with references to discoveries, accounts of the inhabitants of various islands, and comments upon their characters and manner of living. In 1767, for example, the Critical review compared the islanders with the American Indians, to the disadvantage of the latter:

The little we know of the inhabitants of the islands in the Pacific Ocean, tells us, that they want neither address nor good sense. The same is not the case with the people of that great continent [America]; any tribes our navigators have hitherto discovered there, being sunk into the lowest degree of brutality.<sup>4</sup>

In the same review, the author called attention to the distinctions between savages in different parts of the South Seas. Such distinctions now began to be important, not for commercial purposes, as were those in De Brosse's history,<sup>5</sup> but because men were becoming interested in observing in the South Sea natives

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-38.

<sup>4</sup>XXIII (1767), 205-06.

<sup>5</sup>See above, pp. 18-19. (This reference is to the complete dissertation, which is on file only in the University of Chicago Libraries.)

the various stages in man's progress from a state of nature to civilization.

It is certain, that all the islands and continents in this immense region are not peopled universally by brutal savages. Many islands have been found in those seas whose inhabitants were quiet and inoffensive; nay, some have been found intirely ignorant of the use of arms of any sort, though amply provided with all the comforts of life, that a fruitful soil and benign climate could bestow.<sup>6</sup>

A few months later, the Scot's magazine included under "Historical Affairs" a reference to Wallis's return from the South Seas and a brief account, given by one of the people on board, of new discoveries. He describes the newly discovered King George's Island (Tahiti) as large, fertile, and charming; abounding in "all the choicest productions of the earth."<sup>7</sup> The natives, friendly enough after a preliminary skirmish, were "pretty much civilized, considering that the arts have made but little progress among them, and that they are unacquainted with the use of any metals, not even of iron."<sup>8</sup>

A further indication of interest occurred in the Court miscellany in the same year.<sup>9</sup> For the first time, undoubtedly because of the attention to the South Seas, there appeared in English an extract from Father le Gobien's History of the Ladrone Islands,<sup>10</sup> describing the manners and customs of the Ladrone natives. Although the passage contains some unfavorable elements, it is on the whole a highly idealized picture. The island is described as an earthly paradise:

Though situated within the Torrid Zone, yet the sky here is always serene, the air pure and healthy, and the heat is never excessive. The trees covering the mountains are always green, and the vallies every where intersected by crystal streams, render those islands a perfect paradise.<sup>11</sup>

The inhabitants of this paradise were tall and well proportioned, and their healthful and easy lives caused them to live

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<sup>6</sup>Critical review, XXIII (1767), 210.

<sup>7</sup>XXX (1768), 379.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>IV (1768), 353-56.

<sup>10</sup>I have been unable to examine a copy of this work. It was first published in Paris in 1700.

<sup>11</sup>Court miscellany, IV (1768), 353.



to a vigorous old age:

Their stature is advantageous, and their limbs well-proportioned. . . . They often live to an hundred years or more, yet retain the health and vigour of men of fifty. Many are the concurrent causes of this longevity. Habituated from their early infancy to the changes of the atmosphere, their nourishment is quite simple and uniform, nor do they know any of those despicable arts used by us to quicken a depraved appetite, and incite them to overload their stomachs. Their exercises, though regular, are always moderate, in fishing, cultivating the ground, and caring for their cocoa-trees. Above all, their easy and careless manner of life, exempt from cares and solicitude for the future, leaves their minds and bodies in full vigour, even to the extreme of old age.<sup>12</sup>

Their characteristics other than physical were not, however, presented in so favorable a light. Although "plunged in the deepest ignorance, and destitute of every thing valued by the rest of mankind," no nation, in Le Gobien's opinion, "ever showed more presumption, or a more overweening conceit of themselves, looking on their own nation as the only sensible, polished, and wise, in the world, and beholding every other people with the greatest contempt."<sup>13</sup> Le Gobien illustrates their conceit by quoting a speech purported to have been made by a chief in 1670 in an attempt to persuade his countrymen to throw off Spanish domination.

These Europeans (says this Indian) would have done better, had they continued quiet at home. We had no need of their assistance to live happily. Content with what our islands afford, we wanted nor wished for any thing more; and the knowledge they have brought us, serves only to inflame our appetites, and increase the number of our wants. They find fault with us for going naked. Had a contrary fashion been necessary, nature would not have omitted it. Why load ourselves with cloaths, things in themselves quite superfluous, and impede the free action of our limbs, under the pretext of modest covering? They call us unlettered and barbarous. But are we to take this on their assertion? Do not we daily see, that, under the specious pretence of instruction, they corrupt our manners, abolish our ancient simplicity, and deprive us of liberty, the first blessing in this world! They try to persuade us, that they come to make us happy; and, alas! there are among us many foolish enough to believe them. But how can we fall into this error, when we reflect, that it is only since the arrival of these strangers, that we are afflicted with a variety of diseases, formerly unknown, and that our quiet and repose are gone! In short, they seem to have arrived here, only to afflict and torment us. Their

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 355.



priests murder our children with their poisoned water, and our sick with their oils, while their attendants massacre our people with impunity, by the superiority of their destructive weapons. Before their coming we knew nothing of those insect tribes that now cruelly disturb us. We had neither rats, flies, mice, or musquitos, which seem sent into the world to be the scourge of mankind. Such are the goodly presents they brought us in their large canoes. Till now, when did we hear of rheums, fluxes, and fevers? Some slight ailments we had but they were easily removed; while they have brought numberless maladies to infect our people, which all their boasted science is utterly unable to cure. And is this the price at which we purchase iron and a thousand other trifles, the value of which is only imaginary? These Christians upbraid us with our poverty. What then do they seek among us, and what can incite them to make such long and hazardous voyages to get at our islands? Believe me, they would not come so far, if they had not need of us. To what purpose serve the doctrines they profess to teach us? To bring us under subjection to their laws, to oblige us to adopt their customs, and thus to deprive us of that liberty our ancestors transmitted to their descendants; In one word, to make us unhappy during our whole lives, in expectation of a chimerical felicity, which is to take place when we no longer exist. They call our history a heap of fables. But have we not the same right to call theirs a collection of absurdities? Their whole art lies in taking advantage of our candour and simplicity; and thus they abuse our good-nature, and render us miserable. We are blind and ignorant, say they; and true it is, we have been blind in not sooner discovering their pernicious designs, and hindering their establishment among us. But let us yet apply the remedy before it is too late. They are but a handful of men, whom we can easily master. Though we have none of their destructive weapons, yet we can overpower them by numbers, and, by one blow, regain our liberty, and deliver ourselves from the insults of those intruders.<sup>14</sup>

The conceit shown in the speech is of secondary interest to the student of primitivism. Of prime importance is the fact that here we have the reasoning and the language of primitivism; civilization introduces new wants, new cares, diseases, and detracts from natural liberty and happiness.

The following year (1769) the Gentleman's magazine also carried an extract from Le Gobien's account. In part, it covers the same material, lauding as the other passages did, the beauty of the islands, and the health and vigor of the islanders.<sup>15</sup> There are also several additional points. The natives are said to excel in the "art of dissimulation," so that for a long time the Spaniards thought their air of honest simplicity a sign of

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 355-56.

<sup>15</sup>XXXIX (1769), 220-21.

good nature. But they were gradually undeceived.<sup>16</sup> The writer comments too upon their marriage customs. The vows were binding only so long as the contracting parties agreed, and if separation occurred, the wife took the children and all household possessions. Many men, therefore, preferred to buy girls and live with them in common, but this practice was frowned upon by the "sober part of the nation."<sup>17</sup>

The extract also includes Le Gobien's opinion on that ever important point--stealing. In this comment, Le Gobien made a new distinction between the natives' treatment of each other and their treatment of strangers:

These islanders hold murder and robbery in abhorrence; and so far are they from being thieves, as the name of the country seems to indicate, that they scarce know what it is to lock up their houses, and yet no man takes aught from his neighbour. This honest principle, however, must be understood to extend only to their intercourse with one another; as to their dealings with strangers, they well enough deserve the name by which they are stigmatized.<sup>18</sup>

Except for stealing, however, their treatment of strangers was marked by great humanity. An instance of this quality was their generous treatment of the Spaniards who were shipwrecked on the coast in 1638. The natives on this occasion endeavored to relieve the Spaniards' distress "by every kind of good office."<sup>19</sup>

In 1771, again before the official account, a second anonymous history of a voyage to the South Seas was published, this time of Cook's voyage (1768-71). A journal of a voyage round the world . . . 1768-71<sup>20</sup> contains a relatively brief yet fairly detailed account of South Sea Island life, particularly in Tahiti.

The author describes the inhabitants of this island as commonly "tall and large in size, but not strong and vigorous; their joints being more flexible than those of the most delicate

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 222. The writer notes, however, that perhaps the Europeans are to blame, for at first they are very kind; then later they treat the natives as slaves.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>(London, 1771.) The authorship of this account has been attributed by some to Captain Cook, by others to Joseph Banks or Sidney Parkinson. The Journal, however, does not correspond with the published journals of any of these men.



European woman . . . .<sup>21</sup> He found them a hospitable people, yet they had to be watched constantly, for the very persons who voluntarily brought the visitors provisions would frequently then steal from them.<sup>22</sup> The practice of stealing was universal, the servants particularly being "the most dexterous thieves and pickpockets perhaps in the whole world."<sup>23</sup> The author, however, qualifies his criticism of this practice by adding that "it must be acknowledged that they were not wantonly dishonest, but as often as they stole things that were useless to themselves, which frequently happened, they either voluntarily brought them back to their owners, or laid them in places where they must be necessarily found; . . . ."<sup>24</sup> Moreover, among themselves, they apparently regarded stealing as a crime, for they punished by beating those who stole food, and by death, those who stole clothes or arms.<sup>25</sup>

The author also briefly characterizes Tahitian government, religion, and manufacturing.<sup>26</sup> Although these natives had made "but little progress towards civilization and refinement," yet their government contained distinctions in rank, "so naturally," comments the author, "do the passions of mankind lead them to aspire to dominion; and so easily do the differences in their bodily and intellectual faculties enable some of them to obtain it to the detriment of the rest, who are made subservient to them."<sup>27</sup> Their religion consisted in a belief in one supreme God and a number of inferior deities; they had not, however, a "mode of divine worship; neither the dictates of nature or of reason having suggested to them the expediency or propriety of paying external adoration to the deity . . . ."<sup>28</sup> The principal object of manufacturing was cloth, which was made by an ingenious method.<sup>29</sup> They were also skilled in making bows, arrows, and spears or javelins.<sup>30</sup>

The New Zealanders, less minutely described than the

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<sup>21</sup> A journal of a voyage round the world . . . . 1768-71,  
p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 40

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 41-42

<sup>26</sup> See ibid., pp. 43-55.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 45. Cf. pp. 47-48.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> See ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

Tahitians, are nevertheless compared with them in one or two interesting particulars. The author was astonished at the "degree of madness" to which they worked themselves before battle and found them in martial courage "much superior" to the Tahitians.<sup>31</sup> Both, however, he says, "seem to agree in their propensities to knavery,"<sup>32</sup> although his picture of New Zealand dishonesty is even blacker than his characterization of the Tahitians in this respect. Indeed, he concluded, after seeing many instances of the former's cheating in trade, that "they had never received any sentiment of probity, either from the suggestions of a moral sense, or the precepts of education . . . ."<sup>33</sup> He also found that the New Zealanders, unlike the Tahitians, were cannibals.<sup>34</sup>

This account was widely reviewed, a circumstance which points again to the tremendous popular interest in the South Seas. The Gentleman's magazine quoted from it a long passage about the newly discovered Tahiti;<sup>35</sup> the London magazine<sup>36</sup> and the Scot's magazine<sup>37</sup> published summaries of its account of Tahitian appearance, government, religion, and customs; and the Critical review included passages describing life in Tahiti and New Zealand.<sup>38</sup> These reviews are, on the whole, objective; they contain no important comments, favorable or adverse, upon the material they quote.

At about the same time, however, there appeared in several of the magazines one of the first of many expressions of civilized man's regret at leaving the happiness of Tahitian life.<sup>39</sup> This forms the conclusion of "a letter from a gentleman on board the Endeavour" giving an account of the manners and customs of Tahiti and other Society Islands:

We continued here three months and became as easy and familiar in the time as the natives; who are a kind, hospitable, active, sensible people. We married with their women, and enjoyed a felicity amongst them peculiar to the salu-

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 71. Cf. ibid., p. 85.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 94-96.

<sup>35</sup>XLI (1771), 509-12.

<sup>36</sup>XL (1771), 507-09.

<sup>37</sup>XXXIII (1771), 581-85.

<sup>38</sup>XXXII (1771), 256-61.

<sup>39</sup>Gentleman's magazine, XLI (1771), 407-08; Scot's magazine, XXXIII (1771), 513-14.



brity of so sweet a clime. As for my part, I never relinquished a situation with so much grief and dissatisfaction . . . .<sup>40</sup>

The letter contains, too, one of the first eulogies of the beauty of women in the Society Islands: "We sailed from Utahitèe to Hou à Hanlè--which is the Isle of handsome women, . . . and I vow, with the greatest sincerity, that it justly deserves the name--for I never beheld such a beautiful race of women, so elegantly limbed, and so divinely featured . . . ." <sup>41</sup>

During this period of mounting interest in the South Seas, the French navigator, Bougainville, had returned from an extended voyage there (1766-69), bringing with him a Tahitian, Aoutourou. The account of Bougainville's voyage, translated by John Reinhold Forster in 1772, <sup>42</sup> was the most complete source of information about the South Seas before Hawkesworth's official account in 1773. And, in general, it paints a highly favorable picture of the natives--particularly of the Tahitians.

It is clear from Bougainville's account, however, that he did not regard the Tahitians as living in a real state of nature. It was the Pecherais in Terra del Fuego who were in that state, and Bougainville poses the question whether or not they should be pitied for the barrenness of their lives. "Of all the savages I ever saw, the Pecherais are those who are most deprived of every convenience; they are exactly in what may be called, a state of nature; and, indeed, if any pity is due to the fate of a man, who is his own master, has no duties or business to attend, is content with what he has, because he knows no better, I should pity these men; who, besides being deprived of what renders life convenient, must suffer the extreme roughness of the most dreadful climate in the wor[l]d." <sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Gentleman's magazine, XLI (1771), 407. Cf. Scot's magazine, XXXIII (1771), 513.

<sup>41</sup> Gentleman's magazine, XLI (1771), 407. Cf. Scot's magazine, XXXIII (1771), 513.

<sup>42</sup> A voyage round the world. Performed by order of his most Christian Majesty, in the years 1766, 1767, 1768, and 1769 (Dublin, 1772).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 178. Cf. p. 176, where Bougainville describes them as so unpolished as to be incapable of surprise at works of art such as ships and various objects brought by the French.

The Tahitians were far indeed from living in such a manner. Their island is pictured as a "garden of Eden," where Nature bestowed liberal blessings and life was easy and happy.

I thought I was transported into the garden of Eden; we crossed a turf, covered with fine fruit-trees, and intersected by little rivulets, which keep up a pleasant coolness in the air, without any of those inconveniences which humidity occasions. A numerous people there enjoy the blessings which nature showers liberally down upon them. We found companies of men and women sitting under the shade of their fruit-trees; they all greeted us with signs of friendship; those who met us upon the road stood aside to let us pass by; every where we found hospitality, ease, innocent joy, and every appearance of happiness amongst them.<sup>44</sup>

In this paradise, because of the healthful climate and the simple life, the natives enjoyed excellent health and a happy old age.

In short, what better proofs can we desire of the salubrity of the air, and the good regimen which the inhabitants observe, than the health and strength of these same islanders, who inhabit huts exposed to all the winds, and hardly cover the earth, which serves them as a bed, with a few leaves; the happy old age to which they attain without feeling any of its inconveniences; the acuteness of all their senses; and lastly, the singular beauty of their teeth, which they keep even in the most advanced age.<sup>45</sup>

They were, moreover, as Bougainville constantly points out, remarkably beautiful. Nowhere could one find better models for Hercules and Mars than among the men of Tahiti;<sup>46</sup> and the women, not inferior to most European women in agreeable features, in beauty of body "vie with them all."<sup>47</sup>

Bougainville also praises many qualities in the character of these people. They were friendly, gay, and hospitable.<sup>48</sup> The

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 230-31. Cf. ibid., pp. 217-18, 246-47; the Universal magazine, LI (1772), 142, quotes this extract in a review of Bougainville's voyage.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 251. Cf. ibid., p. 145 where Bougainville comments upon the excellent physical qualities of the Patagonians, men "left entirely to nature."

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 220. Cf. ibid., p. 221 where Bougainville compares a young girl to Venus.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 230, 231.



French daily walked unarmed among them and everywhere met with instances of their amiability, not the least of which to the French was the offering of young girls, for on this island, says Bougainville, "the ease of the golden age is still in use."<sup>49</sup> Love there was not regulated by the rules of civilized countries; there was no sense of sin about its actions. Bougainville, describing one instance, comments upon the difference in the attitude of the natives and the French.

. . . . the hut was immediately filled with a curious crowd of men and women, who made a circle round the guest, and the young victim of hospitality. The ground was spread with leaves and flowers, and their musicians sung an hymeneal song to the tune of their flutes. Here Venus is the goddess of hospitality, her worship does not admit of any mysteries, and every tribute paid to her is a feast for the whole nation. They were surprised at the confusion which our people appeared to be in, . . . .<sup>50</sup>

But Bougainville's Tahitians were not entirely admirable and happy. They were, he records, "expert filchers," a trait which Bougainville, apparently uninterested in the question of the innateness of a moral sense, attributes to curiosity and to the fact that "there are always base-minded people every where."<sup>51</sup> Moreover, their easy lives, filled with pleasure, had been productive not merely of witty and humorous temperaments, but also of fickleness and indolence.

THUS accustomed to live continually immersed in pleasure, the people of Taiti have acquired a witty and humorous temper, which is the offspring of ease and of joy. They likewise contracted from the same source a character of fickleness, which constantly amazed us. Every thing strikes them, yet nothing fixes their attention; amidst all the new objects, which we presented to them, we could never succeed in making them attend for two minutes together to any one. It seems as if the least reflection is a toilsome labour for them, and that they are still more averse to the exercises of the mind, than to those of the body.<sup>52</sup>

Bougainville also discovered that their happiness was by no means so universal as he had at first thought. Instead of equality, the French found great distinctions in rank.

I HAVE mentioned above, that the inhabitants of Taiti seemed to live in an enviable happiness. We took them to be almost equal in rank amongst themselves; or at least enjoy-

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-61.

ing a liberty, which was only subject to the laws established for their common happiness. I was mistaken; the distinction of ranks is very great at Taiti, and the proportion very tyrannical.<sup>53</sup>

Nor should one overlook the fact that Bougainville was not a thoroughgoing primitivist even in his admiration for the Tahitians. Except when he wrote of their health and beauty, his praise of them did not disparage civilized man. He was enthusiastic about them in many respects, it is true, and his descriptions have at times the heightened emotional tone characteristic of much primitivistic writing, but nowhere did he indicate a desire to lead the life of a Tahitian, nor a wish to reform Europeans by introducing Tahitian manners and customs. Indeed, Bougainville showed little interest in comparing civilized and primitive states. He drew no conclusions in his account concerning man's progress or deterioration as he becomes more civilized. This task remained for others.

Gilbert Stuart, the historian,<sup>54</sup> reviewing Bougainville's account for the Monthly review, deplored the absence of just such interest and, moreover, of sufficiently precise information to assist in the important study of the manners of man in all stages of civilization.

NO subjects are more curious, and few are more important, than an enquiry into the progress of mankind, from their rudest condition to the most perfect state in which they have appeared. But though the highest advantages accrue to literature and science, from a comparison of the different stages of civilization and refinement, which pass between the age of the untutored savage, and that of the polished citizen; it is almost perpetually to be regretted that the materials on which all such enquiries are to be founded, are collected by men who possess but an inferior degree of penetration, who perceive not the importance of this kind of knowledge, nor describe, with sufficient precision, the usages and manners of the nations they have visited; and who are unable to distinguish between those particulars which arise from the influence of physical qualities, and those which are to be accounted for by the operation of moral causes.

The publication before us is diffuse, and assumes an importance in its manner; but if accurately examined into, it

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>54</sup> See Benjamin C. Nangle, The monthly review first series 1749-1789 (Oxford, 1934), pp. 43, 66. Stuart reviewed political and historical works for the Monthly review until 1773 when, with others, he started the Edinburgh magazine and review.

will be found to contain little of that information which chiefly merits the attention of the philosopher.<sup>55</sup>

From some of Bougainville's information, however, Stuart drew certain conclusions interesting to the historian of primitivism. The reviewer believed that the particulars of Tahitian government revealed the state of men when they had grown into tribes governed by leaders entitled to command because of their possession of certain personal qualities.<sup>56</sup> This state the reviewer called the "free condition of mankind," and he showed further how time and particular causes change it; the position of chief becomes hereditary; his power extends until he becomes a sovereign; wealth and corruption of manners then lead by degrees to despotism.<sup>57</sup> The Tahitians were, apparently, in a happy state of equilibrium in their tribal government, removed alike from the evils of no government and from those of despotism--although the reviewer does not seem interested in lauding this particular state. He appears interested in it chiefly as it represents one stage in the history of government.

His attitude toward Tahitian ethics was similarly objective. The philosopher must understand all manners and judge each nation and age by its own standards, for habit and situation alter those standards.

From this detail, it is not incurious to remark the power of habit and situation in what has a reference to virtue and vice. In one country, chastity is disgraceful; in another, it is meritorious. The Greek loves and marriages are thought of with astonishment by the moralist of the present age; and the exposing of their children, which prevailed among that people, is perfectly shocking to his humanity. We should beware, however, of judging of other ages and nations by the sentiments of our own. Circumstance and accident are perpetually altering the usages and opinions of men; and in the different periods of their barbarism and refinement, we should apply to them different standards of approbation and censure. To the zealot it must be left to pronounce from pre-conceived opinions. But the philosopher, a citizen of all countries, enters into and understands their manners; and determining himself by the most enlarged maxims, judges of, and ascertains the character and conduct of nations and individuals.<sup>58</sup>

In these comments on government and on ethics, Stuart shows clearly one side, at least, of the tremendous interest in

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<sup>55</sup>XLVI (1772), 204. Cf. ibid., pp. 206, 207.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-06.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 209.



the South Seas. The strongly commercial note had disappeared; interest in the history of man predominated.

Then, in 1773, at last appeared the official account of England's activities in the South Seas from 1764 to 1771: Hawkesworth's An account of the voyages . . . by Commodore Byron, Captain Wallis, Captain Carteret, and Captain Cook.<sup>59</sup> The Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, believing that to a literary man should be entrusted the narrative of the voyages, had placed in Hawkesworth's hands the journals of the several commanders and that of Cook's associate, Joseph Banks.<sup>60</sup> From these sources Hawkesworth wove a colorful narrative written in the first person, to which he added his own sentiments and opinions. The result, a thorough mixture of Hawkesworth and the navigators,<sup>61</sup> is an important book in the history of primitivism. Not only does it contain very full accounts of the many South Sea Islands discovered in this series of voyages, but it touches in these accounts almost every aspect of the complex group of ideas called primitivism. When we add to this the facts that the account had been eagerly awaited and that it had an official sanction, its significance is obvious. The picture of the South Seas we find there is indeed an important one.

Again, as in Bougainville's account, a distinction was made between stages of development represented by the various groups of savages encountered by the navigators. The Terra del Fuegians and the savages in the Straits of Magellan are once more described as the lowest in the scale of human beings. They were "the nearest to brutes in their manner and appearance" of any Byron had seen, naked and subsisting on miserable and scanty food.<sup>62</sup> Wallis thought them "the lowest and most deplorable of all human beings," who showed their state most clearly in their indifference to the wonders spread before them by civilized man.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>(London, 1773.)

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., I, iv.

<sup>61</sup>See ibid., I, iv-vi, for Hawkesworth's account of how he wove his material together into a coherent narrative.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., I, 79-80, 66-67, 72.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., I, 392. Cf. ibid., II, 45: "Curiosity seems to be one of the few passions which distinguish men from brutes; and of this our guests appeared to have very little." Cf. Byron, who thinks they have a little curiosity, ibid., I, 80.

And in the account of Cook's voyage they are described as the most destitute, forlorn, and stupid of all human beings, "the outcasts of Nature, who spent their lives in wandering about the dreary wastes, . . . with no dwelling but a wretched hovel of sticks and grass, . . . almost naked; and destitute of every convenience that is furnished by the rudest art, having no implement even to dress their food; . . ."<sup>64</sup>

The natives of New Holland and of New Zealand were likewise low in the scale of civilization. The former did not live in societies, but, "like other animals," were scattered along the coast and in the woods;<sup>65</sup> they were "commoners of Nature" whom the Tahitian Tupia pityingly calls "poor wretches."<sup>66</sup> They were perpetually at war, had scanty food,<sup>67</sup> and--perhaps as a consequence of this lack--were cannibals.<sup>68</sup>

It was a far cry from these savages to the Tahitians and other natives of the Society and Friendly Islands. The latter were well supplied by nature with food,<sup>69</sup> wore clothes of their own manufacture,<sup>70</sup> and had ingeniously constructed dwellings<sup>71</sup> where they lived their peaceful lives in charming surroundings.<sup>72</sup> In contrast to that of the "poor wretches," life on the Society and Friendly Islands must have seemed very desirable indeed to the navigators.

The inhabitants of these islands too were admirable in many respects. In Hawkesworth's account, as in so many earlier ones, they are praised for their physical characteristics. They were well-proportioned, clean-limbed, nimble, and active.<sup>73</sup> They needed no physicians because their temperance led to no dis-

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., II, 59.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., III, 506.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., III, 522.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., III, 449.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., III, 447-49.

<sup>69</sup>See, for example, ibid., I, 467, 472-73, 482-83; II, 186-87.

<sup>70</sup>See, for example, ibid., I, 481; II, 191-92.

<sup>71</sup>See, for a detailed description, ibid., II, 194-95.

<sup>72</sup>For typical descriptions of the islands see ibid., I, 92-93, 95, 596-97.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., I, 95, 112-13, 608.

eases,<sup>74</sup> and in case of wounds, pure blood and nature effected a cure.<sup>75</sup>

They are also depicted as beautiful, although Hawkesworth's descriptions lack the emotional note that characterizes Bougainville's. A typical one is the following generalized description:

Their natural complexion is that kind of clear olive, or Brunette, which many people in Europe prefer to the finest white and red . . . . the skin is most delicately smooth and soft; they have no tint in their cheeks, which we distinguish by the name of colour. The shape of the face is comely, the cheek bones are not high, neither are the eyes hollow, nor the brow prominent; the only feature that does not correspond with our ideas of beauty is the nose, which, in general, is somewhat flat; but their eyes, especially those of the women, are full of expression, sometimes sparkling with fire and sometimes melting with softness; their teeth also are, almost without exception, most beautifully even and white . . . .<sup>76</sup>

Their character, likewise, was on the whole pleasing, for it was marked by kindness and friendliness.<sup>77</sup> Particularly in Tahiti the English experienced many instances of hospitality; they found the Tahitians, from Queen Oberea to the least of the natives, anxious to be friends.<sup>78</sup> The relationship was particularly close between natives and English who had exchanged names--a Tahitian sign of supreme friendship. Hawkesworth relates as an instance of native regard for the laws of hospitality the story of Joseph Banks and his particular friend, Toubourai Tamaide. Banks had accused the Tahitian of theft; the savage was greatly upset, and when the accusation was shown to be a false one he indicated his desire to be killed if ever he should so injure a friend.<sup>79</sup> The relation of this instance of friendship moved Hawkesworth to state that these natives had a sense of right and wrong from "the

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<sup>74</sup>Ibid., II, 231. Hawkesworth bewails, as many later navigators did, the introduction of venereal diseases among these people (ibid., II, 232-33) although he does not feel that this is too dear a price to pay for civilization.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., II, 232.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., II, 187-88.

<sup>77</sup>See, for example, ibid., I, 105-06, 460, 461-79.

<sup>78</sup>See, for example, ibid., II, 80, 84, 85, 99, 106, 117-18, 170, 179.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., II, 100-01.



mere dictates of natural conscience."<sup>80</sup>

Another characteristic pleasing to the navigators was Tahitian ingenuity. The natives were skilled in fishing,<sup>81</sup> in building and sailing canoes,<sup>82</sup> and in manufacturing cloth.<sup>83</sup> Yet they did not have more than these simple arts, for, lacking metal tools,<sup>84</sup> they were still in a technological state of nature; indeed, as Hawkesworth observes, "the liberality of Nature has rendered the diligence of Art almost superfluous . . . ."<sup>85</sup>

But, however much these aspects of Tahitian life and character pleased the navigators, they by no means approved wholeheartedly of these savages. They condemned, regretted, or at least questioned, many phases of their lives. Their government, for example, far from being one in which perfect equality existed, "secured liberty in the most licentious excess to a few, and entailed the most abject slavery upon the rest."<sup>86</sup> Like the feudal system, to which it is compared, it fostered class distinction, with privileges for the rulers, duties and submission for the lower class.<sup>87</sup> Yet the rulers were easily accessible to men of all classes and seemed to be greatly loved, and Hawkesworth describes the natives themselves as happy.<sup>88</sup>

More disturbing than their government, was their attitude toward certain questions of ethics. They were, for example, ar-rant thieves. Few, even among the higher classes, could long re-

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-02. This passage, clearly related in the context only to the native laws of hospitality, has been interpreted broadly by some critics to mean a general sense of right and wrong, and has been quoted as an indication of the primitivistic coloring given the material by Hawkesworth. See, for example, Hoxie Neale Fairchild, The noble savage (New Haven, 1928), p. 109. That Hawkesworth did not intend the observation to be thus interpreted is, I think, made clear by the context of the remark, and by his treatment of the natives' constant stealing. See below, pp. 45-46.

<sup>81</sup>See ibid., I, 483; II, 218-19.

<sup>82</sup>See ibid., I, 486-87; II, 220-26.

<sup>83</sup>See ibid., II, 210-16.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., II, 210.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., II, 242.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., II, 242-44.

<sup>88</sup>Throughout the account, the chiefs and their followers are represented as mingling freely; for Hawkesworth's discussion of their happiness, see below, pp. 49-50.

sist the temptation of nails and beads. In considering this fact, Hawkesworth's attitude was by no means new;<sup>89</sup> we must, he says, "estimate the virtue of these people, by the only standard of morality, the conformity of their conduct to what in their opinion is right . . . ."<sup>90</sup> Moreover, he was inclined to believe that theft was not a testimony of "the same depravity" in them that it was in Europeans since the natives' "temptation was such, as to surmount would be considered as a proof of uncommon integrity among those who have more knowledge, better principles, and stronger motives to resist the temptations of illicit advantage . . . ."<sup>91</sup>

It must not be overlooked, however, that in this very statement in which he excused the Tahitians to a certain extent, Hawkesworth also implied that their principles were not of the best--that it was not surprising they had not the integrity to surmount temptations. This same implication is clear in the comparison which follows the above statement: "An Indian among penny knives, and beads, or even nails and broken glass, is in the same state of trial with the meanest servant in Europe among unlocked coffers of jewels and gold."<sup>92</sup> Moreover, when Hawkesworth considered that the natives also stole from each other he could not excuse them.

Upon this occasion I could not but remark with concern, that these people were capable of practicing petty frauds against each other, with a deliberate dishonesty, which gave me a much worse opinion of them than I had ever entertained from the robberies they committed under the strong temptation to which a sudden opportunity of enriching themselves with the inestimable metal and manufactures of Europe exposed them.<sup>93</sup>

Hawkesworth's comments upon the question show two attitudes: at times he was dispassionate, attempting to judge Tahitians by Tahitian standards, at other times he condemned.

Much the same characterization describes his attitude toward their freedom in love, of which he records many instances.

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<sup>89</sup>See above, p. 41.

<sup>90</sup>Hawkesworth, II, 102. Cf. ibid., II, 149 for another statement of this principle.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., II, 102.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., II, 170.

The natives had no idea of decency, he observed, they "gratify every appetite and passion before witnesses, with no more sense of impropriety than we feel when we satisfy our hunger at a social board with our family or friends."<sup>94</sup> When the English first arrived off the coast of Tahiti, the women endeavored by every wanton means they could devise to lure the strangers ashore,<sup>95</sup> and after they had landed treated them with greatest freedom and without regard for observation.<sup>96</sup> Dancing, their favorite and often indulged entertainment, consisted chiefly in "attitudes and gestures" the wantonness of which, says Hawkesworth, "exceeds all description."<sup>97</sup> A supreme instance of their attitude was the occasion upon which, in the presence of a crowd of natives and Englishmen and assisted by Oberea the queen, a young man and a young girl performed "the rites of Venus" with no sense of shame. It is after relating this incident that Hawkesworth poses the question interesting to philosophers, "Is a sense of shame innate?"

This incident is not mentioned as an object of idle curiosity, but as it deserves consideration in determining a question which has been long debated in philosophy; Whether the shame attending certain actions, which are allowed on all sides to be in themselves innocent, is implanted in Nature, or superinduced by custom? If it has its origin in custom, it will, perhaps, be found difficult to trace that custom, however general, to its source; if in instinct, it will be equally difficult to discover from what cause it is subdued or at least overruled among these people, in whose manners not the least trace of it is to be found.<sup>98</sup>

For the most part, these instances of Tahitian freedom from the constraint of civilized men's rules are related dispassionately. Some disapproval is implied (in the comparison with New Zealand modesty, for example, and in descriptive phrases), but not expressed. The case is different, however, when Hawkesworth describes the Arreoyo, a free love society whose membership includes most of the principal people in Tahiti. Introducing his

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., II, 196.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., I, 438-39, 440.

<sup>96</sup>See, for example, ibid., I, 458-59; II, 85. Hawkesworth makes an interesting distinction between the "carriage and conversation" of the Tahitians and that of the New Zealanders. In the case of the latter, he says, "there was as much modest reserve and decorum with respect to actions, which yet in their opinion were not criminal, as are to be found among the politest people in Europe" (see ibid., III, 450).

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., II, 265.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., II, 128.



account of the group, Hawkesworth strongly expresses his disapproval: ". . . there is a scale in dissolute sensuality, which these people have ascended, wholly unknown to every other nation whose manners have been recorded from the beginning of the world to the present hour, and which no imagination could possibly conceive."<sup>99</sup> And the account itself contains expressions of displeasure over their practices.<sup>100</sup>

It is not surprising in an account such as Hawkesworth's that a comparison should be made between the life of these simple people and that of the civilized Europeans. They had many admirable qualities and practices; they had some deplorable ones. But were they happier than Europeans? Was their state of society preferable? To a literary man writing in a period tremendously interested in the study of man, these questions were inescapable. Hawkesworth's answers are not without confusion, although, on the whole, they are antiprimitivistic. It seems clear, at least, that he was not a "hard" primitivist. The few desires of the inhabitants of the Straits, their perfect indifference to everything they saw "though it may preserve them from the regret and anguish of unsatisfied desires," seemed, notwithstanding (in Hawkesworth's opinion), "to imply a defect in their nature; for those who are satisfied with the gratifications of a brute, can have little pretension to the prerogatives of men."<sup>101</sup> Again, he weighed the disadvantages of the Terra del Fuegians with their contentment arising from easily gratified desires. This time he admitted a possible balance of good and evil, but not, however, an advantage on the side of savage life.

They seemed to have no wish for any thing more than they possessed, nor did any thing that we offered them appear acceptable but beads, as an ornamental superfluity of life. What bodily pain they might suffer from the severities of their winter we could not know; but it is certain, that they suffered nothing from the want of the innumerable articles which we consider, not as the luxuries and conveniencies only, but the necessities of life; as their desires are few, they probably enjoy them all; and how much they may be gainers by an exemption from the care, labour and solicitude, which arise from a perpetual and unsuccessful effort to

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., II, 207.

<sup>100</sup>See especially ibid., II, 208-09.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid., I, 392.

gratify that infinite variety of desires which the refinements of artificial life have produced among us, is not very easy to determine; possibly this may counterbalance all the real disadvantages of their situation in comparison with ours, and make the scales by which good and evil are distributed to man, hang even between us.<sup>102</sup>

For another miserable people, the New Zealanders, however, he urged the need of civilization. ". . . whatever may be said in favour of a savage life, among people who live in luxurious idleness upon the bounty of Nature, civilization would certainly be a blessing to those whom her parsimony scarcely furnishes with the bread of life, and who are perpetually destroying each other by violence, as the only alternative to perishing by hunger."<sup>103</sup>

But what of the Tahitians? In the account they are called a happy people;<sup>104</sup> many times the luxurious ease of their lives is described.<sup>105</sup> Here certainly one might find material for making invidious comparisons with civilized life. Yet in the one passage in which Hawkesworth commented directly upon the happiness of these people, he was far from ready to acknowledge it superior to that of civilized man. He observed that the natives, like children, were easily stirred; but their sorrows were transient, for, like children, they lived in the moment. Were they, then, happier than civilized man? Hawkesworth's comment shows doubt:

Their tears indeed, like those of children, were always ready to express any passion that was strongly excited, and like those of children they also appeared to be forgotten as soon as shed; . . . . .

It is not indeed strange that the sorrows of these artless people should be transient, any more than that their passions should be suddenly and strongly expressed; what they feel they have never been taught either to disguise or suppress, and having no habits of thinking which perpetually recal the past, and anticipate the future, they are affected by all the changes of the passing hour, and reflect the colour of the time, however frequently it may vary; they have no project which is to be pursued from day to day, the subject of unremitted anxiety and solicitude, that first rushes into the mind when they awake in the morning, and is last dismissed when they sleep at night. Yet if we admit that they are upon the whole happier than we, we must admit that

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., II, 59.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., II, 449.

<sup>104</sup>See, for example, ibid., II, 103-05.

<sup>105</sup>See, for example, ibid., II, 83, 99.

the child is happier than the man, and that we are losers by the perfection of our nature, the increase of our knowledge, and the enlargement of our views.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, in the light of Hawkesworth's statement in the introduction to the account, it seems unlikely that he really believed men losers by civilization. There he asks the question whether or not civil society is a state contrary to the will of the Creator. His answer is thoroughly antiprimitivistic:

Will it be said, that to exercise the faculties which are the distinguishing characteristics of our nature is unnatural? and that being endowed with the various powers which in civil societies only can be brought into action, it was incongruous to the will of our Creator that any such society should be formed, and that it would be pleasing to him if, still continuing in a savage state, these powers should lie torpid in our nature, like life in an embryo, during the whole of our existence? This surely must appear extravagant and absurd in the highest degree, especially as it must be allowed, that although commerce and arts in some instances expose life, in others they preserve it; they supply the wants of Nature, without rapine and violence, and by producing a common interest, they prevent the inhabitants of the same country from being divided into different clans, which among savages are almost perpetually committing hostilities against each other, with a ferocious cruelty which is not to be found where civil government and literary knowledge have meliorated the manners of mankind. Upon the whole, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude, that the increase of knowledge and commerce are ultimately common benefits;  
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In general, Hawkesworth's attitude throughout the account is not inconsistent with this answer. His admiration for some aspects of South Sea island life was never at the expense of civilization, and it was balanced by his disapproval of other aspects. Moreover, many of his comments were merely those of an interested but, upon the whole, a dispassionate observer of human nature. The primitivist and antiprimitivist alike might have found plenty of ammunition in the pages of his account, but Hawkesworth himself could not be said to have swung the balance of favor in either direction. His unfortunate decision to use the first person for his narrative involved him in several difficulties, not the least of which was having the responsibility for many of the ideas he found in Cook and Banks thrust upon him. Whether we are dealing with Cook, Banks, or Hawkesworth, however, the importance of the account itself must not be minimized.

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., II, 105.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., I, xviii-xix.



It had been eagerly awaited and upon its publication was widely read and reviewed. The important periodicals printed excerpts month after month;<sup>108</sup> there were four editions of it within sixteen years;<sup>109</sup> and it was translated into French and Dutch in 1774.<sup>110</sup> As in the case of Bougainville's voyage, the reviewers again bewailed the lack of exact and sufficiently penetrating information about the Islanders to enable the philosopher to draw conclusions concerning the characteristics of human nature and to speculate about the origin and progress of civil society.<sup>111</sup> With what material they had, however, they made some observations interesting to the historian of primitivism. From an account of Tahitian government, one reviewer drew confirmation of the opinion of those writers who contend that monarchy is not the earliest mode of government.<sup>112</sup> This reviewer also compared the Tahitians with Tacitus's Germans (familiar exemplars of "hard" primitivism), mentioning their similarity in government and in less important particulars such as drinking bouts of chiefs, punishment for adultery, and lack of money.<sup>113</sup>

Toward the morals of the islanders the attitudes of the reviewers varied. One stated that the ladies of Tahiti must not be judged by English or European standards. Situation, climate, and government produce "peculiarities in the modes of thinking of men," which must be taken into consideration when one judges

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<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Monthly review, XLIX (1774), 136-45, 289-304, 479-98; Critical review, XXXVI (1773), 241-54, 369-82, and XXXVII (1774), 1-10; Gentleman's magazine, XLIII (1773), 320-24, 374-80, 417-23, 484-91, 537-43, 590-96, and XLIV (1774), 17-22, 68-74, 111-15; London magazine, XLII (1773), 263-67, 318-20; Scot's magazine, XXV (1773) and XXXVI (1774), passim.

<sup>109</sup> A second edition was published in 1773, a third in 1775, and a fourth in 1789.

<sup>110</sup> Relation des voyages entrepris par ordre de Sa Majesté Britannique . . . . (Paris, 1774); Reizen rondom de Wereld (Rotterdam, 1774).

<sup>111</sup> See, for example, Edinburgh magazine and review, I (1773), 28; Monthly review, XLIX (1774), 483-84; and Critical review, XXXVII (1774), 7-8. The Critical review, XXXVI (1773), 377, however, says that of Tahiti there is "a copious and circumstantial account, which will prove interesting to those who take pleasure in contemplating the history of mankind."

<sup>112</sup> Edinburgh review and magazine, I (1773), 28-30.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 30, footnote.

any people.<sup>114</sup> William Bewley, writing for the Monthly review,<sup>115</sup> was inclined to treat Oberea's lack of chastity humorously.

That we may not, from the specimens we have given of Queen Oberea's extreme sensibility and distress [when the English leave Tahiti] and our allusions to the story of Queen Dido [in her attachment to wanderers], leave our tender-hearted Readers under apprehensions, for a month to come, that the desertion of her new friends was followed by a catastrophe as tragical as that of the Queen of Carthage, on the dereliction of Aeneas; we shall so far anticipate a part of the contents of the succeeding volume, as to acquaint them, not only that this Princess survived the departure of her guests; but that, near two years afterwards, when she again first appears upon the scene, we find her in a very pleasant situation. Mr. Banks, attending her levee for the first time, in the forenoon, blundered into her Majesty's bedchamber, where he found her in the arms of a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty-, named Obadee, whom she had selected as the object of her favours. Our Otaheitean Princess appears to have been no more disconcerted on this occasion, than if he had interrupted her at breakfast; and Mr. Banks was the only one of the party who was confounded at the accident; for such are the singular manners and enlarged notions of these islanders, with respect to a certain appetite, that the gratification of it never gives occasion to scandal, nor is conducted with any degree of secrecy. Accordingly her Majesty, who had lain late that morning, hastily dressed herself, and then, as a mark of special grace, having clothed Mr. Banks in a suit of fine cloth, proceeded with him, with the greatest sang froid imaginable, to the tents.<sup>116</sup>

A third reached the conclusion that simplicity and not purity was the distinguishing characteristic of the Tahitians.

If in some actions they are subject to any degree of restraint, it seems to be the effect of custom and prejudice, rather than of religion or virtue; and their ideas of vice, if any such they entertain, appear to be circumscribed within so narrow bounds, as amount to the utter exclusion of moral duty. Upon the whole we may pronounce, from a survey of the Otaheitean life, that simplicity, and not purity of manners, is the distinguishing characteristic of those people.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., I (1773), 35-36.

<sup>115</sup>See Nangle, pp. 4 and 120. Bewley was a surgeon and apothecary, practicing in Norfolk. He was a close friend of Priestly and of Dr. Burney. His contributions to the Monthly were his only literary efforts.

<sup>116</sup>Monthly review, XLIX (1774), 301-02.

<sup>117</sup>Critical review, XXXVII (1774), 8.

The majority, however, merely quoted Hawkesworth's account without comment.<sup>118</sup>

Probably the most interesting observation in the reviews, from the point of view of the historian of "soft" primitivism, is that of Bewley in his comparison of the state of Tahiti with that state of nature which Rousseau praises. "The people of Otaheite," says the reviewer, "in the state in which they were found by our countrymen, present us with a picture of human society resembling, in more respects than one, that which the ingenious but fanciful Rousseau has delineated, when he exhibits a view of what he terms the 'real youth of the world'; a state which he considers as the best for man; all the ulterior supposed improvements of which 'have been so many steps tending, in appearance, towards the advantage of individuals, but in fact, towards the deterioration of the species.'<sup>119</sup> But, he further points out, the two states are not identical; the Tahitians were found in a tolerably civilized state, some inequality already existing among them, for they were divided into ranks and under a "well ordered and seemingly strict police."<sup>120</sup> The Tahitians, then, in the eyes of Bewley, already showed signs of deterioration, and in his opinion the contact with Europeans was hastening their decay. The "Dolphin" had increased inequality and sown the seeds of war by introducing "spike-nails, beads, ribbons, and other irritamenta malorum."<sup>121</sup> In fact, European commodities, particularly iron, "had introduced among these hitherto artless and honest islanders, one of the most distinguishing characteristics in the Ovidian portrait of the Iron age--the Amor sceleratus habendi."<sup>122</sup> New and artificial wants, continues the reviewer, had excited "a spirit of cupidity and thievery, with which they do not seem before to have been infected; and which, like a pestilence, indiscriminately destroyed the innate seeds of probity, both in men and women of all ranks and orders among them."<sup>123</sup>

Here we have a picture not of a people progressing to a

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<sup>118</sup> See, for example, the accounts in the Gentleman's magazine, the London magazine, and the Scot's magazine (n. 98).

<sup>119</sup> Monthly review, XLIX (1774), 487.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 488.



better state, nor of a people living in an ideal state, but of one in whom the first signs of deterioration were already visible, who had already begun the downward curve in the cycle of history. It is important to note, too, that this deterioration had begun even before contact with Europeans and the creation of new wants.

In the same year as the publication of Hawkesworth's narrative, Sydney Parkinson, who had accompanied the expedition as draftsman to Banks, published his account.<sup>124</sup> His description of the Islanders agrees in the main with the facts in the official account, but differs to some extent in emphasis. The most primitive people were, in Parkinson's eyes, the New Hollanders; they lived on shell fish, had no idea of clothes,<sup>125</sup> and were unsocial.<sup>126</sup> The natives of New Zealand were also low in the scale of civilization. They were cannibals and seemed even to be proud of this custom, as if "it was the most laudable virtue, instead of one of the worst of moral vices."<sup>127</sup> They were rude and more unpolished than the Tahitians,<sup>128</sup> and were accustomed to war from their infancy.<sup>129</sup> They had, however, some redeeming qualities, for they were undaunted warriors<sup>130</sup> and their women were much less free than the women of other islands.<sup>131</sup> But it is clear that Parkinson did not admire the savages of this stage in civilization.

With the Tahitians, the case is different. Several comparisons of these Islanders with civilized man show the superiority of the former. They were, for one thing, apparently more honest.

They must be very honest amongst themselves, as every house is without any fastening. Locks, bolts, and bars, are peculiar to civilized countries, where their moral theory is the best, and their moral practices too generally of the worst  
 . . . .<sup>132</sup>

That they were also more happy he was convinced; more easily satisfied wants, greater enjoyment of the present, fewer

<sup>124</sup> A Journal of a voyage to the South Seas . . . . (London, 1773).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

diseases led to a contentment unknown to civilized man.

Nature's wants, it is true, are but few, and the uncivilized part of mankind, in general, seem contented if they can acquire those few. Ambition, and the love of luxurious banquets, and other superfluities, are but little known in the barbarous nations; they have, in general, less anxious thought for the morrow, than civilized; and therefore feel more enjoyment while they partake of heaven's bounty in the present day. Unaccustomed to indulgences in cloathing and diet, which Europeans have carried to an extreme, they are less subject to diseases; are more robust; feel less from the inclemencies of the seasons; and are, in constitution, what the ancient Britons were before their civilization. Unhappily for us, the athletic constitution of our ancestors is not to be found amongst us, being enervated by excesses of various kinds; while diseases, the effect of intemperance and debaucheries, contaminate our blood, and render them hereditary amongst our offspring.<sup>133</sup>

Yet Parkinson was not an out-and-out primitivist. After commenting upon the greater honesty of these uncivilized men, he observes that these facts "might induce a celebrated writer to conclude, though erroneously, that mankind, upon the whole, are necessarily rendered worse and less happy, by civilization, and the cultivation of the arts and sciences."<sup>134</sup> In another comment, which again admitted the greater happiness of uncivilized man, contented with what he has, Parkinson also tacitly rebuked the Tahitians for their indolence in not trying to improve upon what Nature had given them so abundantly:

. . . . the island looks like one continued village, and abounds with cocos, bread=fruit, and apple=trees; the fruit of which drops, as it were, into their mouths; and may be the cause that they are an indolent people: Were they inclined to industry, provisions might be found in greater plenty amongst them; and, by proper cultivation, the fruits of the island would not only be increased, but their quality might be improved. They seem, however, as contented with what is spontaneously produced, as if they had attained to the ne plus ultra, and are therefore happier than Europeans in general are, whose desires are unbounded.<sup>135</sup>

Obviously Parkinson did not, in spite of his recognition of the superior happiness of uncivilized man, wish to disparage civilization. Civilization need not make man "worse and less happy."

With Parkinson's Journal, accounts of this first group of voyages in the new era of discovery came to an end. Knowledge of

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid. The italics are mine.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

the South Sea Islands had by this time been greatly increased; interest in them was widespread. And there were widely varying attitudes toward the Islanders--particularly the Tahitians. They were happy, but with the unthinking happiness of children; they were living in the Golden Age; they were a partially civilized people progressing toward a more highly civilized state; they were already degenerating. Further acquaintance through successive voyages was to sharpen some of these attitudes and to introduce new ones.

In 1775 Cook returned from his second voyage to the South Seas, his account of which was published two years later.<sup>136</sup> Written without the rhetorical flourishes of Hawkesworth's account of the first voyage, it is a straightforward, dispassionate narrative, concerned neither with praising nor belittling the natives. It confirms many of the impressions Cook had received during his first visit, carefully corrects some of the earlier statements, and adds information about other islands in the South Seas.

Again we find a distinction between the various stages in civilization among the South Sea Islanders. The most wretched were the Terra del Fuegians;<sup>137</sup> the New Hollanders were also ignorant and miserable, having no settled home nor ordered government;<sup>138</sup> the New Zealanders, although partially civilized, lived a wandering life,<sup>139</sup> were frequently at war, and were cannibals.<sup>140</sup> Again the inhabitants of the Society Islands shone in contrast, for they had a peaceful, orderly life under a mild and equitable

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<sup>136</sup> A voyage toward the South Pole . . . 1772-75 (Dublin, 1777).

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., II, 187.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., I, 112, 124-25.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., I, 100.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., I, 242. In part Cook attributes their cannibalism to lack of commerce and connection with strangers, in part to the absence of a settled government. "An intercourse," he says, "with foreigners would reform their manners, and polish their savage minds. Or, were they more united under a settled form of government, they would have fewer enemies, consequently this custom would be less in use, and might in time be in a manner forgotten. At present, they have but little idea of treating others as themselves would wish to be treated, but treat them as they expect to be treated." Cf., for another expression of this opinion, ibid., II, 61.



government<sup>141</sup> in an island blessed not only with the necessities, but with the greatest profusion of many of the luxuries of life.<sup>142</sup>

On the whole, Cook's account of his stay in Tahiti and other Society Islands differs little from that of his earlier visit. He did, however, correct a few of his former reports. Further acquaintance with the natives convinced him that the women had been falsely represented as being universally unchaste. He draws a distinction in this account between prostitutes and married and unmarried women of the higher classes, pointing out that seeing the former mix freely with the others led one to believe all the women alike. This, he felt, was far from true, although he notes in the next sentence that prostitution is not there a "crime of so deep a dye" as to cause forfeiture of the esteem and society of the community, and that all are versed in coquetry and fix few bounds to their conversation.<sup>143</sup> On the other hand, further acquaintance with the New Zealanders forced him to record the fact that European contact had not improved the morals of either women or men. During his first visit, he had been inclined to regard the women as more chaste than most South Sea Islanders, but now desire for iron had changed them and prostitution flourished.<sup>144</sup>

In this account, too, other islands are described--if more briefly, at least in terms as enthusiastic as those used for Tahiti. The savages of the Marquesas Islands, for example, are said to be "without exception the finest race of people in this sea. For fine shape and regular features, they perhaps surpass all other nations."<sup>145</sup> Amsterdam and Middleburg of the Friendly Islands, highly praised by Tasman in 1642,<sup>146</sup> are described as

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., I, 446. While Cook again recognizes class distinctions in their government, he emphasizes the free and unceremonious approach to the chiefs and the love of the people for their rulers, and concludes that the government must be "mild and equitable."

<sup>142</sup>Ibid., I, 180. Cf. ibid., I, 340, 370.

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., I, 183-84.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., I, 127-28.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., I, 304. Cook points out that their language shows they are of the same nation as natives of the Society Islands.

<sup>146</sup>See above, p. 47, n. 96.

extremely fertile and healthful<sup>147</sup> and inhabited by people whose joy and contentment shine in their faces.<sup>148</sup> And the New Caledonians, living in a country to which nature had been comparatively niggardly,<sup>149</sup> yet exceeded in good nature all the nations the travellers had met with.<sup>150</sup>

The objective, dispassionate point of view which one feels throughout Cook's account is perhaps nowhere better seen than in his description and characterization of Omai, the South Sea Islander whom Captain Furneaux had brought back to England. At a time when London was engaged in adoring or despising this islander, Cook carefully noted Omai's advantages and disadvantages and described without coloring his behavior in England.

I at first rather wondered that Captain Furneaux, would encumber himself with this man, who, in my opinion, was not a proper sample of the inhabitants of these happy islands, not having any advantage of birth, or acquired rank; nor being eminent in shape, figure, or complexion. For their people of the first rank are much fairer, and usually better behaved, and more intelligent, than the middling class of people, among whom Omai is to be ranked. I have, however, since my arrival in England, been convinced of my error; for excepting his complexion, (which is undoubtedly of a deeper hue than that of the Earees or gentry, who, as in other countries, live a more luxurious life, and are less exposed to the heat of the sun) I much doubt whether any other of the natives would have given more general satisfaction by his behaviour among us. Omai has most certainly a very good understanding, quick parts, and honest principles; he has a natural good behaviour, which rendered him acceptable to the best company, and a proper degree of pride, which taught him to avoid the society of persons of inferior rank. He has passions of the same kind as other young men, but has judgment enough not to indulge them in an improper excess. I do not imagine that he has any dislike to liquor, and if he had fallen into company where the person who drank the most, met with the most approbation, I have no doubt, but that he would have endeavoured to gain the applause of those with whom he associated; but fortunately for him, he perceived that drinking was very little in use but among inferior people, and as he was very watchful into the manners and conduct of the persons of rank, who honoured him with their protection, he was sober and modest, and I never heard that, during the whole time of his stay in England, which was two years, he ever once was disguised with wine, or ever shewed an inclination to go beyond the strictest rules of moderation.

Soon after his arrival in London, the Earl of Sandwich, the first Lord of the Admiralty, introduced him to his Majesty at Kew, when he met with a most gracious reception, and

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid., I, 198, 219.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., I, 220-21.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., II, 123.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., II, 108.

imbibed the strongest impression of duty and gratitude to that great and amiable prince, which I am persuaded he will preserve to the latest moment of his life. During his stay among us he was caressed by many of the principal nobility, but did nothing to forfeit the esteem of any one of them; but his principal patrons were the Earl of Sandwich, Mr. Banks, and Dr. Solander; the former probably thought it a duty of his office to protect and countenance an inhabitant of that hospitable country, where the wants and distresses of those in his department had been alleviated and supplied in the most ample manner; the others, as a testimony of their gratitude for the generous reception they had met with during their residence in his country. It is to be observed, that though Omai lived in the midst of amusements during his residence in England, his return to his native country was always in his thoughts, and though he was not impatient to go, he expressed a satisfaction as the time of his return approached. He embarked with me in the *Resolution*, when she was fitted out for another voyage, loaded with presents from his several friends, and full of gratitude for the kind reception and treatment he had experienced among us.<sup>151</sup>

Here is no "noble savage," nor yet an uncouth native; Omai, to Cook, was an intelligent man from a simple society, who marvelled at the strange sights of England, behaved well, was grateful for the kindness of the English, and yet pleased to return to his country.

A similar objectivity characterizes one of Cook's general comments on the South Sea Islanders and again illustrates well the tone of the whole account.

Three things made them our fast friends. Their own good nature and benevolent disposition; gentle treatment on our part; and the dread of our firearms. By our ceasing to observe the second, the first would have worn out of course; and the too frequent use of the latter would have excited a spirit of revenge, and perhaps have taught them that firearms were not such terrible things as they had imagined.<sup>152</sup>

Very different is the other account of this voyage, written by George Forster<sup>153</sup> who with his father, the eminent scientist, John Reinhold Forster, had accompanied Cook. Forster's narrative is, as he makes clear in his introduction,<sup>154</sup> more than a mere collection of facts. In it, Forster says, he tried "to connect the ideas arising from different occurrences, in order, if possible, to throw more light upon the nature of the human

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<sup>151</sup>Ibid., I, 165-67.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., I, 333.

<sup>153</sup>A voyage round the world . . . . (London, 1777).

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., I, xii.



mind, and to lift the soul into that exalted station, from whence the extensive view must 'justify the ways of God to man.'<sup>155</sup> When one considers this aim, he is not surprised to find Forster's account the most philosophical one that had been published up to 1777. For the first time, we have an account written by a man tremendously interested in man's history, and at the same time one who had had first-hand experience with his materials.

Forster's attitude toward the South Sea Islanders seems on the surface contradictory, for he expressed both strongly primitivistic and antiprimitivistic ideas. His description of the Tahitians particularly is, with few exceptions, primitivistic both in the ideas expressed and in the language used. The description of his first sight of Tahiti is typical of the exalted terms with which he described the island throughout his account.

IT was one of those beautiful mornings which the poets of all nations have attempted to describe, when we saw the isle of O-Taheiti, within two miles before us. The east-wind which had carried us so far, was entirely vanished, and a faint breeze only wafted a delicious perfume from the land, and curled the surface of the sea. The mountains, clothed with forests, rose majestic in various spiry forms, on which we already perceived the light of the rising sun; nearer to the eye a lower range of hills, easier of ascent, appeared, wooded like the former, and coloured with several pleasing hues of green, soberly mixed with autumnal browns. At their foot lay the plain, crowned with its fertile bread-fruit trees, over which rose innumerable palms, the princes of the grove. Here every thing seemed as yet asleep, the morning scarce dawned, and a peaceful shade still rested on the landscape. We discerned however, a number of houses among the trees, and many canoes hauled up along the sandy beaches. . . . The sun beginning to illuminate the plain, its inhabitants arose, and enlivened the scene.<sup>156</sup>

With every excursion the English made on its plains the island became "more enchanting."<sup>157</sup> Eight months after their arrival, Forster compared it to Calypso's enchanted island:

It [Tahiti] was indeed infinitely more beautiful at present, than it had been eight months ago, owing to the difference of the season. The forests on the mountains were all clad in fresh foliage, and gloried in many variegated hues; and even the lower hills were not entirely destitute of pleasing spots, and covered with herbage. But the plains, above all, shone forth in the greatest luxuriance of colours, the bright-

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<sup>155</sup>Ibid.

<sup>156</sup>Ibid., I, 253-54.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., I, 312.

est tints of verdure being profusely lavished upon their fertile groves; in short, the whole called to our mind the description of Calypso's enchanted island.<sup>158</sup>

In this beautiful place, the natives led idyllic lives. Forster's extended description of the "happy uniformity" of their days contains most of the elements of the Golden Age; spontaneous production of food; days spent in pleasure and ease in a splendid climate; vigorous, beautiful, and strong inhabitants.

Two or three bread-fruit trees, which grow almost without any culture, and which flourish as long as he himself can expect to live, supply him with abundant food during three-fourths of the year. The superfluity is fermented and preserved, as a wholesome, nourishing and palatable bread, for the remaining months. Those plants which require the greatest attendance at Tahitee, the cloth-trees and eddo-roots, are cultivated with much less trouble than our cabbages and kitchen-herbs, though their uses are infinitely more extensive. The whole process necessary to plant a bread-tree, is to break off a sound branch, and stick it in the ground. The banana, whose rich clusters seem too great a weight for the herbaceous stem, annually shoots afresh from the root. The royal palm, at once the ornament of the plain, and a useful gift of nature to its inhabitants; the golden apple, whose salutary effects we have so strongly experienced, and a number of other plants, all thrive with such luxuriance, and require so little trouble, that I may venture to call them spontaneous. The manufacture of dress is an agreeable pastime for the women, and the building of houses and canoes, with the making of tools and arms, are occupations which become amusing by being voluntary, and intended for the more immediate use of the artificers. Most of their days are therefore spent in a round of various enjoyments, in a country where nature has lavished many a pleasing landscape; where the temperature of the air is warm, . . . where the sky is almost constantly serene. This climate, and its salubrious productions, contribute to the strength and the elegance of their form. They are all well-proportioned, and some would have been selected by Phidias or Praxiteles, as models of masculine beauty. Their features are sweet, and unruffled by violent passions. Their large eyes, their arched eyebrows, and high forehead, give a noble air to their heads, which are adorned by strong beards, and a comely growth of hair. These, as well as their beautiful teeth, are the proofs of vigour, and of a sound habit of body. The sex, the partners of their felicity, are likewise well-formed; their irregular charms win the heart of their countrymen, and their unaffected smiles, and a wish to please, insure them mutual esteem and love. A kind of happy uniformity runs through the whole life of the Tahitians. They rise with the sun, and hasten to rivers and fountains, to perform an ablution equally reviving and cleanly. They pass the morning at work, or walk about till the heat of the day increases, when

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., II, 50.

they retreat to their dwellings, or repose under some tufted tree. There they amuse themselves with smoothing their hair, and anoint it with fragrant oils; or they blow the flute, and sing to it, or listen to the songs of the birds. At the hour of noon, or a little later, they go to dinner. After their meals they resume their domestic amusements, during which the flame of mutual affection spreads in every heart, and unites the rising generation with new and tender ties. The lively jest, without any ill-nature, the artless tale, the jocund dance and frugal supper, bring on the evening; and another visit to the river concludes the actions of the day. Thus contented with their simple way of life, and placed in a delightful country, they are free from cares, and happy in their ignorance.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., II, 109-12. Cf. *ibid.*, I, 364-66 for another picture of happy life in Tahiti: "Allowing for the imperfect state of sublunary happiness, which is comparative at best, there are not, I believe, many nations existing whose situation is so desirable. Where the means of subsistence are so easy, and the wants of the people so few, it is natural that the great purpose of human life, that of multiplying the number of rational beings, is not loaded with that multitude of miseries which are attendant upon the married state in civilized countries. The impulses of nature are therefore followed without restraint, and the consequence is a great population, . . . . The evident distinction of ranks which subsists at Tahitee, does not so materially affect the felicity of the nation, as we might have supposed. Under one general sovereign, the people are distinguished into the classes of ariee, manahoua, and towto, which bear some distant relation to those of the feudal systems of Europe. The simplicity of their whole life contributes to soften these distinctions, and to reduce them to a level. Where the climate and the custom of the country do not absolutely require a perfect garment; where it is easy at every step to gather as many plants as form not only a decent, but likewise a customary covering; and where all the necessities of life are within the reach of every individual, at the expence of a trifling labour, ambition and envy must in a great measure be unknown. It is true, the higher classes of people possess some dainty articles, such as pork, fish, fowl, and cloth almost exclusively; but the desire of indulging the appetite in a few trifling luxuries, can at most render individuals, and not whole nations, unhappy. Absolute want occasions the miseries of the lower class in some civilized states, and is the result of the unbounded voluptuousness of their superiors. At O-Tahitee there is not, in general, that disparity between the highest and the meanest man, which subsists in England between a reputable tradesman and a labourer. The affection of the Tahitians for their chiefs, which they never failed to express upon all occasions, gave us great room to suppose that they consider themselves as one family, and respect their eldest born in the persons of their chiefs. Perhaps the origin of their government was patriarchal and the king might only be dignified by virtue of being considered as the father of his people, till by degrees the constitution settled into its present form. Still there remains much ancient simplicity in that familiarity between the sovereign and the subject."



All of these elements, it is true, had appeared in earlier descriptions of Tahiti, but without the force they have in Forster's account. He combines them in one passage and beside it places the strongly contrasting picture of an English sailor's life.

If we fairly consider the different situations of a common sailor on board the *Resolution*, and of a Tahitian on his island, we cannot blame the former, if he attempted to rid himself of the numberless discomforts of a voyage round the world, and preferred an easy life, free from cares, in the happiest climate of the world, to the frequent vicissitudes which are entailed upon the mariner. The most favourable prospects of future success in England, which he might form in idea, could never be so flattering to his senses, as the lowly hope of living like the meanest Tahitian. It was highly probable, that immediately on his return to England, instead of indulging in repose those limbs which had been tossed from pole to pole, he would be placed in another ship, where the same fatigues, nocturnal watches, and unwholesome food, would still fall to his share; or though he were allowed to solace himself for a few days, after a long series of hardships, he must expect to be seized in the midst of his enjoyments, and to be dragged an unwilling champion to the defence of his country: to be cut off in the flower of his age, or to remain miserably crippled, with only half his limbs, might be the alternatives to which he would be reduced. But supposing he could escape these misfortunes, still he must earn his subsistence in England, at the expence of labour, and "in the sweat of his brow," when this eldest curse on mankind is scarcely felt at Tahitee. The drudgery of our country people is continual, and their exertion of strength very violent. Before they can make the least use of corn, they must undergo the various labours of ploughing, reaping, thrashing, and grinding. They are obliged to cultivate an hundred times more than they consume, in order to support a breed of animals, whose assistance in husbandry is absolutely necessary; and to pay for the liberty of tilling the ground, for the articles of dress indispensable in a raw climate; for their tools, and a variety of things, which they might easily make with their own hands, if agriculture alone did not engross their time and attention. The tradesman, the manufacturer, the artist, all are obliged to work with equal assiduity, in order to furnish the goods, in return for which the farmer gives them bread. How different from this, how indolent is the life of the Tahitian!<sup>160</sup>

Forster's characterization of the natives is similarly primitivistic. A "peculiar gentleness of disposition" was their general characteristic;<sup>161</sup> "the remembrance of injuries, and the spirit of revenge, did not enter into the composition of the good

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<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 108-09.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 256-57.

and simple Tahitians";<sup>162</sup> among them, the English "have met with the most generous and exalted sentiments . . . that do honour to the human race in general."<sup>163</sup> When he compared them with the men of civilized countries, he found them superior. For "one villain in these isles, we can shew at least fifty in England, or any civilized country."<sup>164</sup> Their hospitality, frequently noted by the navigators, is also praised by Forster, but with a new emphasis on its disinterested nature.

. . . we have often been witnesses to reciprocal acts of kindness, which convinced us, that the social virtues are frequently exercised amongst themselves. . . . Their hospitality towards us was frequently quite disinterested; and gave us a right to form the most flattering conclusions in regard to their conduct towards each other. They are hospitable without seeming to know it; and leave to strangers who visit them, the pleasing and grateful task of recording their virtues.<sup>165</sup>

They were, also, for the first time, characterized as men of sensibility. Unlike civilized men who have been taught to hide their emotions, these simple children of nature freely expressed their feelings:

Our friends parted from us, with the sincerest expressions of grief, and shedding floods of tears, reproached some of us with a want of sensibility. Our civilized education in general tends to stifle the emotions of our heart; for as we are too often taught to be ashamed of them, we unhappily conquer them by custom. On the contrary, the simple child of nature, who inhabits these islands, gives free course to all his feelings, and glories in his affection towards the fellow-creature.<sup>166</sup>

That the islanders had some faults, it was, of course, impossible for Forster to overlook. It is in keeping with his primitivistic picture of them, however, that he attempted to explain most of their faults rather than merely to condemn. Theft, he says, is not so serious a fault among the Tahitians, as among Europeans. Indeed, blame for the frequent thieving lies in great part with the latter, who have brought strong temptations among the natives.

In my opinion this vice is not of so heinous a nature among the Tahitians, as amongst ourselves. People whose wants

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., I, 321.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., I, 386.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., II, 156-58.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., I, 417. Cf. ibid., II, 12.

are so easily satisfied, and in whose manner of living there is so much equality, can have very few motives to steal from each other, and their open houses without doors and bars, are so many proofs of mutual safety. The blame then lies in a great measure upon us, for bringing temptations in their way too powerful to be withstood. They seem indeed not to think their transgressions of great signification, perhaps from a reflection that they do not materially injure us by any little larceny.<sup>167</sup>

Nor were the Tahitians "wholly plunged in sensuality" as they had been represented.<sup>168</sup> The Arreoy Society universally condemned by earlier navigators, Forster believed to have been originally a celibate order, useful in supplying warriors without domestic ties. Although this original chaste spirit had been lost, he thought there was not "the least reason to charge them with a refinement of voluptuousness."<sup>169</sup> Travellers' tales of promiscuous embraces in his opinion lacked confirmation.<sup>170</sup> He was, however, disturbed over the murdering of the children of Arreoy members; but was comforted by the fact that Omai said few children are born and that their mothers were never willing to kill them!<sup>171</sup>

Forster went even further in his account. Not only did he paint a highly primitivistic picture of the South Sea Islander, attempting to explain his few faults, but he also deplored the results of the islanders' contact with civilized nations. It was possible that venereal diseases had been introduced through that contact;<sup>172</sup> certainly numbers of innocent savages had been killed in encounters with armed sailors.<sup>173</sup> But the greatest harm had been the corruption of their morals, without any compensation--either by the introduction of some benefit or by the correction of some other immoral custom among them.<sup>174</sup> Forster wished that the communication lately established might be broken before it was too late. "It were indeed sincerely to be wished, that the intercourse which has lately subsisted between Europeans and the natives of the South Sea islands may be broken off in time, before the corruption of manners which unhappily characterizes

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid., I, 344-45.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., I, 386.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., II, 132.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., II, 133-35.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., I, 239-40.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., I, 212.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., I, 212-13.



civilized regions, may reach that innocent race of men, who live here fortunate in their ignorance and simplicity."<sup>175</sup>

At the same time he recognized in the Islanders signs of decay that could not be attributed to European contact. That so much immorality should exist in so simple a society he felt was "a reflection very disgraceful to human nature in general, which, viewed to its greatest advantage here, is nevertheless imperfect."<sup>176</sup> And there too where he had at first thought almost perfect equality existed, he found privileged parasites among the chiefs. This discovery led him to the melancholy conclusion that their present happiness must be of uncertain duration. He anticipated the cycle of revolt and unhappiness to follow, although he felt that probably the change would not come soon.

How long such an happy equality may last, is uncertain; since the indolence of the chiefs is already, notwithstanding the exuberant fertility of the soil, a step toward its destruction. . . . At last the common people will perceive these grievances, and the causes which produced them; and a proper sense of the general rights of mankind awaking in them, will bring on a revolution. This is the natural circle of human affairs; at present there is fortunately no room to suppose, that such a change will take place for a long series of years to come; but how much the introduction of foreign luxuries may hasten that fatal period, cannot be too frequently repeated to Europeans.<sup>177</sup>

One might well conclude that Forster, if not actually a thoroughgoing primitivist, had a strong sympathy with the primitivistic point of view; that he found in Tahiti an almost ideal exemplar, and that he believed Tahitian life preferable to that of civilized nations. This, however, was not really the case. That the Tahitians were happy he freely acknowledged, but that their happiness was really to be preferred to civilized blessings he did not believe. Even the common sailor, whose lot was filled with disadvantages as compared to a Tahitian existence, would, Forster felt, shortly tire of "an uninterrupted tranquility and continual sameness, suited only to a people whose notions are simple and confined."<sup>178</sup> It is part of God's wisdom that there should be different ideas of happiness in different parts of the world.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup>Ibid., I, 303.

<sup>176</sup>Ibid., I, 337-38.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., I, 366-68.

<sup>178</sup>Ibid., II, 112.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., II, 113.

He regretted, moreover, that Omai had been sent back to Tahiti without having been taught something of English agriculture, arts, and manufactures; that he would not upon his return be much improved nor even the bearer of useful gifts which might have made him the benefactor of his people.<sup>180</sup> He reflected with pleasure that on the ships about to start again for the South Seas, domestic animals were to be taken to the "harmless" Tahitians. "The introduction of black cattle and sheep on that fertile island," he wrote, "will doubtless increase the happiness of its inhabitants; and this gift may hereafter be conducive, by many intermediate causes, to the improvement of their intellectual faculties."<sup>181</sup>

In keeping with this attitude, Forster concluded his account with an acknowledgment of the blessings of civilized man, superior to the unhappy savages of Terra del Fuego at one extreme and the happy Tahitians at the other:

In one extreme we say, and not without compassion, the dull, hungry, deformed savages of Tierra del Fuego, incapable of guarding against the severities of their wretched climate, and having their mental faculties reduced to that miserable situation which places them next to brutes. In the other, the happier tribes of the Society Islands, beautifully formed, placed in a delightful climate, which supplies all their wants; sensible of the advantages of a well-ordered society, affectionate towards each other, and accustomed to gratify their senses, even till they lead to excesses. From the contemplation of these different characters, the advantages, the blessings which civilization and revealed religion have diffused over our part of the globe, will become more and more obvious to the impartial enquirer. He will acknowledge, with a thankful heart, that incomprehensible goodness which has given him a distinguished superiority over so many of his fellow-creatures, who follow the impulse of their senses, without knowing the nature or name of virtue; without being able to form that great idea of general order, which could alone convey to them a just conception of the Creator.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid., I, xvi-xvii. This remark involved Forster in a short controversy with Mr. Wales, the astronomer who accompanied Cook on his second voyage. I have been able to examine only one pamphlet in the controversy: Forster's Reply to Mr. Wales' remarks (London, 1778). In this, Forster re-states his position in regard to Omai, takes a passing blow at Mr. Wales's intellect and morals, and answers Mr. Wales's statement that English arts and manufactures are not so well adapted to Tahitian climate as to English.

<sup>181</sup> A voyage round the world . . ., I, xvii.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., II, 606-07.

Cook's and Forster's accounts at once occupied the attention of reviewers, for added to the usual interest in the South Seas, was the remembrance of Omai's recent visit. Extracts from the two accounts appeared month after month.<sup>183</sup> Like the voyagers, the reviewers were careful to call attention to the correction concerning the sensuality of the Islanders, one of the chief differences between these and accounts of earlier voyages. The Critical review, for example, commented upon the changing attitudes toward the natives in this respect:

The character which Mr. Forster gives of the natives of O-Tahetee is far more favourable than what has been drawn by preceding voyagers, . . . . It appears from his narrative, that those people who live in a simple state of civilization are by no means addicted in general to that brutal sensuality which former voyagers have rashly concluded, from the irregularity of a few individuals, to be the distinction of the whole community. O-Tahetee seems more to resemble Phaeacia than the island of Circe, and to be the seat of hospitality in many instances. The account of the first meeting with the natives is sufficient to give us a high opinion of their benevolent disposition; and the following passage contains an instance of their hospitality, . . . .<sup>184</sup>

The importance attached to this correction is evident, too, from a review appearing at this time in the Gentleman's magazine. The Reverend Mr. John Trusler in A descriptive account of the islands lately discovered in the South Seas, published in 1777, had apparently once more related the story of the celebration of the rites of Venus as an instance of the sensuality of the Tahitians.<sup>185</sup> The reviewer minced no words in his rebuke of Trusler for continuing to regard the Islanders as extremely sensual.

Among their customs the Doctor instances one, which was formerly told, but since in part discredited, of the Queen of the island, who, to amuse herself and her company, ordered a young man of uncommon stature to perform certain .

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<sup>183</sup> See, for example, Gentleman's magazine, XLVII (1777), 491-94; Monthly review, LVI (1777), 266-70, 457-67; LVII (1777), 17-21; Critical review, XLIII (1777), 211-21, 295-330, 370-80; Lady's magazine, VIII (1777), 193-97, 260-63; Scot's magazine, XXXIX (1777), 252-55, 306-12, 487-89; Annual register, XX (1777), 63-67.

<sup>184</sup> XLIII (1777), 298. Cf. Scot's magazine, XXXIX (1777), 309; Annual register, XX (1777), 67.

<sup>185</sup> I have been unable to examine a copy of Trusler's account and have had, therefore, to work solely from a few brief reviews of it, chiefly that in the Gentleman's magazine, XLVIII (1778), 85-86.



rites with a little girl twelve years old; "which was done without the least sense of impropriety on either side; and though the girl seemed to want no instructions in the office, her Majesty vouchsafed to assist at the ceremony;" and from this misrepresentation of the fact the Doctor elsewhere observes, "that the people of this island have not the least sense of indelicacy, but gratify every passion publicly, without any sense of impropriety;" a reflection equally unjust and unpardonable; unjust, as the fact on which it is grounded is false; and unpardonable, as the Doctor ought not to have taken for granted what the first reporter had asserted, when later publications would have informed him better; for it is now universally known, that indecencies of that kind are so far from being generally countenanced, that the act which gave occasion to this reproachful character was held in abhorrence, and the abandoned woman who commanded it was soon after deprived of her authority. That the parties who were the performers were practised in such feats, is equally false; for one who was an eye-witness has declared, that shame debilitated the youth, and that the girl was as unpractised as innocence itself. . . . .

Complications of this kind, gleaned partly from books, and partly made up of ill-founded suggestions, are a disgrace to literature, and an insult to the understanding of intelligent readers.<sup>186</sup>

Indeed, voyagers and reviewers alike seem pleased that these simple islanders, admirable in so many ways, were not as a nation sunk in brutal gratification of the senses. Nowhere in England is raised a voice, such as Diderot's in France at about this time, to praise promiscuity and freedom of love in Tahiti.

Then in 1778 appeared John Reinold Forster's Observations.<sup>187</sup> Here, for the first time, we find the South Sea Islanders fitted into a philosophic system. The narrative of the voyage is reduced to a bare log of eight pages; the book itself contains observations on the earth, water, atmosphere, changes of the globe, organic bodies, and man. In the last section, Forster expressed his desire to do much more than describe the manners and characteristics of a few individuals; he wished rather to trace the history of mankind in general.<sup>188</sup> He had had the opportunity in his voyage with Cook of observing man in every stage of development and therefore felt more qualified than those whom he calls "closet philosophers" to write man's history.

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<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>Observations made during a voyage round the world, on physical geography, natural history, and ethic philosophy, etc. (London, 1778).

<sup>188</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

What is extant on that head in the French and English languages, contains either slight sketches and fragments, or systems formed in the closet or at least in the bosom of a nation highly civilized, and therefore in many respects degenerated from its original simplicity. None of these authors ever had the opportunity of contemplating mankind in this state, and its various stages from that of the most wretched savages, removed but in the first degree from absolute animality, to the more polished and civilized inhabitants of the Friendly and Society Isles.<sup>189</sup>

"Facts," he says, "are the basis of the whole structure; a few fair inferences enabled me to finish the whole."<sup>190</sup>

Forster's "system" is clearly set forth; its interest to the student of primitivism lies in the place he gives to the South Sea Islanders. Man, he believed, had been originally settled in or near the tropics where he could easily secure food, needed no clothing nor shelter, and was happy. Through chance or "cruel necessity" some of these men had moved into the frozen zones in whose inhospitable climate, human nature in time had been debased and had lost its original happiness.<sup>191</sup> Forster, it must be remembered, however, was speaking here of uncivilized or, at most, slightly civilized men. That highly civilized nations were capable of a greater happiness than that of the uncivilized tropical nations he did not doubt. Indeed, in the conclusion which he drew from the points above, he stated that man in "happy" climates approached the happiness and civilization of the European, and that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, a high degree of civilization did not necessarily destroy happiness:

May we not then infer from the above premises, that man unconnected with highly civilized nations, approaches in more happy climates, nearer to that state of civilization, and happiness, which we enjoy; that human nature is really debased in the savages, who inhabit the frozen extremities of our globe, and that their present situation is as it were, a preternatural state. I wish not to be misunderstood; the happiness which European nations enjoy, and are capable of, becomes, on account of the degeneracy of a few profligate individuals, very much debased, and mixed with the miseries, which are entailed upon our civilized societies, by luxury and vice; if therefore the felicity of several European or Asiatic nations, seem to be inferior to that of some of the nations in the South Sea, it is owing to the above-mentioned causes, since it does not seem to follow, that a high degree

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<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

<sup>191</sup>Ibid., pp. 285-87.

of civilization must necessarily lessen, or destroy natural, moral, or social happiness.<sup>192</sup>

Moreover, he believed that God had implanted in man faculties and powers which would enable those in a debased, unnatural condition to rise above it and resume a higher rank in the scale of rational beings:

. . . . Providence has wisely made a provision for preventing the perpetuity of misery and wretchedness in a nation, by infusing originally, in the human soul, such faculties and powers, that when unfolded, or set in motion by unforeseen accidents, shall at last invigorate the minds of men, and supply them with the necessary means and strength for emerging from their debased condition, and enable them to resume gradually a higher rank in the scale of rational beings.<sup>193</sup>

Presumably (Forster does not say so explicitly), it is the further unfolding of these faculties which leads to more highly civilized states. At any rate, he stated that men in society made advances toward lasting happiness and exalted dignity only through observing the great principles of "candour" and humanity.

Men, of different inclinations, who are endued with rational souls, and capable of forming various ideas, are found to make advances to perfection only when they strive to acquire a competent knowledge of a variety of objects [this Forster calls "candour"] and take care to admit no other ideas among those who may serve them in life, than such as are perfectly conformable to truth, and which express to the mind the real qualities and properties of things; and when their thoughts and actions are directed by the strict rule of right . . . . and thus we see the great principles of all rational human beings, ought to be CANDOUR and HUMANITY; which alone are capable of giving to all their ideas, desires, and actions, the true direction towards real, lasting happiness, and raise their nature to that exalted dignity, for which they were originally intended.<sup>194</sup>

Forster's further discussion of these principles shows clearly that he regarded them as those leading to a greater degree of civilization. "Candour" was shown by South Sea Islanders when they desired to know about English government, religion, arts, et cetera;<sup>195</sup> "humanity" when they were hospitable and friendly.<sup>196</sup>

In man's progress toward civilization he passes through

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 287.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 333.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., pp. 383-84.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., pp. 384-86.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., pp. 386-87.



various stages: animality, savagery, barbarism, and, finally, civilization, which in itself has many degrees of refinement.<sup>197</sup> Animality is comparable to infancy--merely animal life; savagery to childhood--no idea of private property nor personal security of others; barbarism to adolescence--the age of violent passions; and civilization to manhood--the period of maturity.<sup>198</sup> Forster had seen representatives of three of these stages during his voyage. The Terra del Fuegians belonged to the second stage;<sup>199</sup> the New Zealanders were in the stage of barbarism;<sup>200</sup> and the inhabitants of the Friendly and Society Isles, particularly Tahiti, were in the early stages of civilization.<sup>201</sup>

According to Forster, each one of these stages has its own happiness. Neither the Terra del Fuegian nor the New Zealander wished to change his lot, to be controlled by laws, and submit to order and subordination.<sup>202</sup> But his state, says Forster, is "nothing more than a state of intoxication; his happiness and contentment founded on mere sensuality, is transitory and delusive; the sum of all his enjoyments is so small, so defective in its particulars, and of so little value, that a man in his senses cannot but think himself happy that he was born in a civilized nation . . . ."<sup>203</sup>

The case of the Tahitian was, however, far different. Forster carefully set forth the kinds of happiness man in society may expect: physical (food, shelter, and dress without too great labor and peril); moral (means of improving intellectual faculty and remaining a free being); and civil or social (certainty of enjoying in a society his physical and moral happiness).<sup>204</sup> He showed, further, that there were degrees of happiness, in society, depending upon various circumstances. First, the greater the

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., pp. 303-04.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 304. Cf. ibid., pp. 576-77.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-02, footnote p. 302.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., footnote p. 302, pp. 320-25.

<sup>201</sup> Throughout, Forster places the Tahitians at the top and shows that they are civilized.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-02.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., pp. 338-39.

variety and number of the objects of physical, moral, and social enjoyments are, the greater is man's happiness. Second, the "longer the duration" of man's enjoyments, the happier he is; and third, the more extensive the influence man's enjoyments have upon his physical, moral, and social felicity, the more happy he will become.<sup>205</sup> According to these principles he judged the happiness of the people he had met in the South Seas. His scale of happiness runs from the Terra del Fuegian through the New Zealander, the natives of New Caledonia and New Hebrides, those of the Friendly Islands, and of the Marquesas Islands, finally reaching the Society Islands, especially Tahiti, where the highest degree of happiness in the South Seas is found.<sup>206</sup> In warm terms of approbation he describes Tahitian happiness:

The first view will convince the unprejudiced observer, of the great happiness which reigns at O-Taheitee and the Society-isles. All the inhabitants are of an agreeable temper, and lovers of mirth and joy; I never saw any one, of a morose, peevish, discontented disposition in the whole nation; they all join to their cheerful temper, a politeness and elegance which is happily blended with the most innocent simplicity of manners. . . . The great fertility and mildness of the climate, reduce the number of their wants, and at the same time afford them after a very moderate labour, a great affluence of food and raiment, and very neat habitations, well adapted to the climate. The pampered epicure in Europe knows hardly the multifarious ingredients of his disguised ragouts, and his palled appetite remains indifferent to the almost infinite variety carried to his table. . . . while the more happy inhabitant of Taheitee plants his own breadfruit tree, and plucks the fruit for his own use; the banana tree raises by his industry and care, its elegant stem, its picturesque leaves, and the delicious fruit all in one year; . . . . In regard to clothes, the Taheitean is most certainly happier than the European, whose dress requires more time, labour, and devices; and to whom folly and fashion have made many articles seem to be necessary, which are really frivolous and absolutely useless; . . . . Their houses are neat and well suited to the climate, and the manners of the nation; I pretend not here to say that these three great articles, food, raiment, and habitation, are in every respect at Taheitee, superior to our food, our dresses, our materials, and houses; it must be allowed these articles are among us, more ingeniously contrived and varied, and better adapted to all seasons, climates, and ranks; but it cannot be denied that these people enjoy a happiness which is more attainable by every individual, for there cannot be an instance among them, that ever a person died for want of shelter, cloth, or food; . . . . The fertility of the country enables them to satisfy their little wants, and to form societies, where they can mutually assist one another, both by their labour and by

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<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 581-82. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 346.

the instruction and knowledge, which willingly flows from the lips of their wise men and fathers; . . . their societies are well regulated; their chiefs have a great love and paternal predilection for the happiness and welfare of their subjects, who, in their turn are attached to their superiors by love and a truly filial duty. The vices which are usual among them, are yet so few in number, and of so harmless a tendency that few societies can boast such innocence, and simplicity of manners. . . . While the youth of both sexes are singing and dancing, and those of a maturer age, active as well in their duties as enjoyments, we have often seen the venerable hoary senior looking upon the more busy scene of life with a complacent smile and a serenity, which bore witness to the happiness enjoyed by all ranks and ages; in a word we are perfectly convinced that these islanders really enjoy a degree of felicity, which is seldom observed in the more civilized countries, and which is here still more enhanced by the generality with which it is diffused over whole nations, by the facility with which it is attainable, and by the just proportion it bears to the present state of these islanders, to whose condition this happiness is perfectly adequate, and which if enlarged would become incompatible with their capacities.<sup>207</sup>

Although Forster observed in this characterization that the Tahitians enjoy a happiness seldom found in more civilized countries, yet he must not be thought to be opposed to further civilizing the Tahitians. Their happiness, like that of the Terra del Fuegians, was adequate to their capacities, but it did not follow that with enlarged capacities, they could not in time reach greater degrees of happiness. In the case of the Terra del Fuegians and New Zealanders he observed, "It is certainly the wish of humanity, and of real goodness, to see all these nations brought nearer to a more improved, more civilized, and more happy state, without the addition of those evils, which abuses, luxury and vice have introduced among our societies."<sup>208</sup> But he believed that the change must be gradual, that man must not expect results overnight, any more than he would expect a baby to become a man in that time.<sup>209</sup>

That Forster also wished to see the Tahitians advance in

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<sup>207</sup>Ibid., pp. 582-86. Cf. ibid., pp. 346-53.

<sup>208</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid., pp. 303-04. See also pp. 305-07 where Forster states that it is too soon to tell what progress in civilization has been made in the South Seas as a result of European contact. He regrets, too, that communication with the natives has not led to the implanting of many intellectual, moral, and social ideas.



civilization is quite clear. He observed, in one passage, that unassisted they could never make rapid progress toward a more improved state, and clearly he believed that such progress was desirable.

I cannot dismiss this subject without observing, that though the tropical isles of the South-Sea, never may, perhaps, be so unhappy, if left to themselves, as to be again degraded to a more debased condition; they will on the other hand, never be able to make, unassisted, any great or rapid progress towards a higher civilization, or more improved condition, because the small size of their isles will not admit of these improvements; [it is necessary for several islands to unite] if they are to make large strides towards improvement in science, morality, arts, manufactures, or husbandry; and thus together form one great scene of happiness.<sup>210</sup>

Moreover, he closed his observations on mankind in the South Seas with an expression of gratitude for his position as a civilized man:

Our minds therefore should be impressed with the most unfeigned feelings and acts of gratitude to Providence for the blessings of a more exalted civilization and education, which give us in every respect so great a superiority over these nations, and assign to us so high a rank in the scale of rational beings; and how much ought not this to encourage us to act up to this greater knowledge, and to maintain by humanity and virtue the exalted station we occupy.<sup>211</sup>

Forster's position might, then, be summarized as follows: a believer in progress, he recognized the evils which often attend the higher stages of civilization but did not think them inevitable. He admitted that the happiness of the Tahitians (in the early stages of civilization) was greater than that of many European countries, but it was adapted to their more simple faculties and ideas and was by no means equal to the happiness open to more highly civilized man. The latter should, in gratitude for his great superiority, attempt to maintain his exalted state free from evil.

Because of the character of Forster's book, his position is set forth more precisely and compactly than is that of most of the voyagers of this period. Yet it really differs little from theirs. Most of them attempted to distinguish between the various stages in civilization which they observed in the Islanders; most of them found the Tahitians a very happy and remarkable

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<sup>210</sup>Ibid., pp. 380-81.

<sup>211</sup>Ibid., pp. 608-09.

nation with but few faults; but not one of them stated that a Tahitian existence was to be preferred to that of an Englishman or of an European. Indeed, there is something highly ridiculous in the thought of a Cook or a Forster or a Byron longing for the indolent sweets of a Tahitian day.

But what of the attitude of the reader of all these accounts? Of the writer who used the South Sea Islands and Islanders as his theme?

On every hand one meets references to the South Seas, representing many interests and attitudes. Philosophers and historians seized upon these new examples of man in a simple society and used them to illustrate various theories. Monboddo, whose Origin and progress of language was published in 1774,<sup>212</sup> scattered references to the South Sea Islanders throughout his book. Like Forster, he believed one must study savage and barbarous nations to form an adequate idea of man's progress from a wild savage animal to a being "humanized" by civilization.<sup>213</sup> Some of his ideas of man's condition in various stages in this progress could be well illustrated by natives discussed in South Sea voyage accounts.<sup>214</sup> In a chapter entitled "Examples from antient and modern history of men living in the brutish state, without arts or civility," he used the natives of New Holland and of Terra del Fuego as examples of natives close to brutes.<sup>215</sup> In support of his theory that man is not more united to his kind than is any other species of animal, but, indeed, that most men at one time or another were cannibals, he referred to the New Zealanders who while "far from being a barbarous or inhuman people," were yet cannibals.<sup>216</sup> The Islanders in general served as examples of the point that man is not naturally an animal of prey, but that in his early state he lived upon the fruits of the earth.<sup>217</sup> It is

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<sup>212</sup>(Edinburgh, 1774.) See Arthur O. Lovejoy, "Monboddo and Rousseau," Modern philology, XXX (1933), 275-96, for a discussion of Monboddo's and Rousseau's relationship.

<sup>213</sup>Monboddo, I, 145-47.

<sup>214</sup>Ibid., p. 250. Monboddo says here that he draws his material from De Brosses's collection of voyages (Paris, 1756).

<sup>215</sup>Ibid., p. 239, footnote, and p. 251.

<sup>216</sup>Ibid., pp. 227-28, footnote.

<sup>217</sup>Ibid., pp. 225-26.

in this connection that Monboddo was reminded of the poetical accounts of the Golden Age which, he says, have a foundation in truth; indeed, some of these accounts represent--with a little poetical embellishment--the islands in the South Seas.

The poetical fictions concerning the golden age have, like most of the Greek fables, a foundation in historical truth; particularly in that circumstance, of men living upon the fruits of the earth, without blood or slaughter. For the account which the antient Greek poets, who were their first historians, as well as the philosophers and divines, give us of that age, is no other than a representation, a little embellished and exaggerated after the manner of the poets, of the simple and natural way in which men lived in the first age of the world, feeding upon herbs and fruits, which the earth produced spontaneously. This golden age may be said yet to exist in some of the countries that have been discovered in the South Sea, where the inhabitants live, without toil or labour, upon the bounty of nature in those fine climates. In some of those countries there was nothing else that the inhabitants could subsist upon; particularly, in the Ladrone islands, when they were first discovered by the Spaniards, there was neither hog nor dog, which are animals commonly found in the islands of the South Sea, nor any other terrestrial animal, of any considerable size, besides man.<sup>218</sup>

In somewhat the same manner, although more extensively, Lord Kames used the Islanders in his Sketches of the history of man, first published in 1774.<sup>219</sup> They served again and again to illustrate his ideas throughout the chapters devoted to discussing the progress in food, property, manners, and treatment of women among men independent of society, and to some extent in society. His belief that variety of character among men does not proceed from variety of climate but is indicative of different races, he supported by pointing to the diversity in character of the South Sea Islanders.<sup>220</sup> Some were hospitable and peaceable; others were bold and hostile. The Society Islands and Bowman's Island particularly are singled out as examples of the first character.<sup>221</sup> His discussion of the effect of food upon men contains a tribute to the good health and long life of the Tahitians,

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., footnote. Cf. ibid., pp. 390-91, footnote, which relates particularly to Tahiti.

<sup>219</sup> I have used the third edition of this work (Dublin, 1779).

<sup>220</sup> See for this discussion, I, 17-22.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21.



arising from their plain vegetable diet and temperate living.<sup>222</sup> Tahitian lack of modesty and chastity, as reported by Bougainville, was called in to support Kames's opinion that these "delicate principles . . . . make no great figure among savages."<sup>223</sup> He noted, however, that later voyagers had contradicted many of Bougainville's statements, and that the New Zealand women were considered comparatively chaste and modest.<sup>224</sup> In discussing his theory that within nations men love one another, while nations as a whole are hostile to other nations, he touched upon the question of theft in the South Seas. It had been observed that the Tahitians never stole from one another, but that they had no compunction about stealing from the French or English.<sup>225</sup> This fact, he felt, supported his belief. In further consideration of the idea he pointed out that the friendliness of some South Sea Islanders toward strangers was a rare instance, with scarcely a parallel in any other part of the world.<sup>226</sup>

A discussion of the influence of soil on the manners of men led him to consider at one extremity barrenness such as one found in New Holland, and at the other the fertility characteristic of the Golden Age of the poets. Both states, in Kames's opinion, lead to undesirable manners, for while the first results in brutishness, the second produces an effeminate race:

Were all the earth barren like New Holland, all men would be ignorant and brutish, . . . . . On the other hand, were every portion of this earth so fertile as spontaneously to feed all its inhabitants, which is the golden age figured by poets, what would follow? Upon the former supposition, man would be a meagre, patient, and timid animal: upon the latter supposition, he would be pampered, lazy, and effeminate. In both cases, he would be stupidly ignorant, and incapable of any manly exertion, whether of mind or body.<sup>227</sup>

Kames had, indeed, no longing for a Golden Age existence. He con-

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., p. 392. Cf. same statement about Ladrone natives, ibid., pp. 391-92.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 283. Unlike Monboddo, Kames never says the Golden Age exists in the South Seas, although he describes some of its characteristics there, and in the passage quoted above it seems probable that he was thinking of the fertility of some South Sea Islands.

fessed that "constant repetition of the same pleasure, would render even a golden age tasteless,"<sup>228</sup> and, in another passage, that a "golden age would to man be more poisonous than Pandora's box; a gift, sweet in the mouth, but bitter, bitter, in the stomach."<sup>229</sup>

In addition to these uses of the islanders as convenient illustrations of various theories, there are incidental references to them on every hand in the literature of the late eighteenth century. In July, 1773, "Almeria" described for the Lady's magazine the dress of that strange people, the Tahitians,<sup>230</sup> and, a few months later, described their character.<sup>231</sup> In 1775, an inquiring, if slightly morbid, gentleman addressed to Mr. Urban of the Gentleman's magazine the query whether the Tahitians cut off the lower jaws of their enemies before or after their prisoners die. He suggested that Mr. Urban discover the answer either from Omai or the voyagers.<sup>232</sup> Still another reader sent to the Scot's magazine in 1776 an enthusiastic plan for a colony in the South Seas. The Tahitians are, he says, "extremely civilized," hospitable, ingenious. They have a fertile soil, a happy climate, and the richest products in the world--pearls, gold, silver, jewels, et cetera. He cannot understand why the government does not colonize the islands immediately and suggests generously that England should proceed fairly by buying the land from the natives.<sup>233</sup> Another gentleman, who had gone on board the "Resolution" at Woolwich to see the curiosities brought from the South Seas, wrote to the London magazine in 1775 that New Zealand appeared to be a good place to settle, that the people there were, from all accounts, "sober, civil, tractable and kind," in spite of their killing and eating seven of the "Adventure's" crew, an

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 407.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>230</sup> IV (1773), 345-46. See also London magazine, XLIV (1775), 247-48 where, in a note on fashions, the writer says feather head-dresses are to be adopted in imitation of the Tahitian ladies. He suggests nose ornaments and teeth of friends as the next step; and states that manners and dress should correspond; consequently the English ladies should become as free as the Tahitians.

<sup>231</sup> Lady's magazine, IV (1773), 474-75.

<sup>232</sup> XLV (1775), 169.

<sup>233</sup> XXXVIII (1776), 351.

incident which was the result of an unprovoked attack by the English.<sup>234</sup> "A.," another reader, had a political interest in the South Seas. He had just finished reading Forster's Voyage and wrote to Town and country (1777) that he had been struck with the account of Tahiti's political constitution. He had "always been of opinion that the mode of government imports little to the happiness of the subject, if those who rule the world consulted the general interest of mankind,"<sup>235</sup> and he was pleased to find the same opinion in Forster. He approved, too, of Forster's conjecture about the probable turn of future events in Tahitian government, for "all men are born with the same material rights; but all give them away, or rather entrust them to the care of a few-- and all retake them when real oppressions rouse, or imaginary grievances inflame them."<sup>236</sup>

The diversity of these references to the Islanders reflects the widespread interest in the South Seas. Most of the foregoing reflect, too, approval of the islands. There were others, however, definitely disapproving. In 1773, Johnson, for example, when confronted by Boswell with the statement that the Tahitians, accustomed to the convenience of the breadfruit tree, laughed heartily at the tedious process of civilized man's bread-making, retorted, "Why, Sir, all ignorant savages will laugh when they are told of the advantages of civilized life."<sup>237</sup> Mrs. Chapone wrote to her friend, Miss Carter, just after the publication of Hawkesworth's Account, her melancholy thoughts upon reading the book:

I have read through Hawkesworth's Account of the Voyages of Cook, &c. I mean as much of them as is readable, for the greater part is only so to navigators. 'Tis a melancholy kind of reading! What an idea does it give one of the state of near half the Globe! and how hard is it to restrain one's wishes to penetrate into the hidden counsels of God, to find out the reason of so great a part of the human species being left so destitute both of corporeal and intellectual good! If the attainment of virtue and happiness is the end of our

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<sup>234</sup> London magazine, XLIV (1775), 439-41. See Gentleman's magazine, XLIV (1774), 460-62 and Annual register, XVII (1774), 243-45 for accounts of the fate of these men.

<sup>235</sup> IX (1777), 115.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>237</sup> George Birkbeck Hill (ed.), Boswell's life of Johnson (Oxford, 1934), II, 248.



being, how should it be that the inhabitants of Otaheite have no consciousness of evil, in the most detestable and pernicious practices? These are things that cannot but excite my wonder, but I think they will never shake my belief in an over-ruling Providence, which is not merely speculative, but a sentiment that I seem to feel irresistibly.<sup>238</sup>

Another disapproving voice was that of the Reverend Vicesimus Knox. In an essay, published in 1777, he rebuked those writers who wished to return man to savage life, and who used Tahitian examples to teach ideas of decency and moral fitness:

It is well known, that several celebrated writers have inferred the absurdity of many, not only innocent, but laudable and beneficial notions and practices, from their being unknown, or different from those established in savage nations in the state of nature. In order to imbibe ideas of decency and moral fitness, they have obliquely referred us to the groves of Otaheite. That such writers should have appeared is wonderful; but it is still more so, that they should have found numerous readers and admirers. And it is a striking event in the history of mankind, that, after the efforts of several thousand years in promoting civilization, many were found desirous of returning to the wretched practices of savage life.<sup>239</sup>

He also pointed out in another essay published in the same year that the famous and praiseworthy hospitality of the Society Islands which reflected disgrace on some European villages, proceeded not from principle but from accident, and was, consequently, of little value.

In several parts of Europe, where social improvements have not yet reached, the traveller is either considered as lawful prey, or else totally disregarded. On the other hand, we find the natives of the Society Isles, separated as they are from all the rest of the world, and by no means far removed from the savage state, remarkably hospitable. Though fear might in some degree cause their civility to Europeans, yet it was not the sole motive of it; for we find their good offices, after all apprehensions were removed, evidently proceeding from the tenderest and most generous affection. On the first appearance of the English on their coasts, they

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<sup>238</sup> Mrs. Chapone, *Letters* (London, 1818), I, 167-68. The letter is undated; presumably it was written between 1774, when Hawkesworth's account was published, and 1777, the date of the next letter in the series. Cf. Vicesimus Knox, "On the manner of writing voyages and travels," *The British Essayists* (London, 1823), XLI, 137-38. Knox comments upon the indelicate and corrupting material in Hawkesworth's account. The essay was published in 1782.

<sup>239</sup> "Strictures on modern ethics," *ibid.* (London, 1819), XLI, 129. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 75 for reference to missionizing of the "poor Otaheiteans and Ulieteans."

naturally considered them as enemies, and boldly opposed their invasion. Many of them exhibited acts of heroism, in defence of their country, scarcely exceeded in the annals of antiquity. But no sooner was the branch of peace held out, than they received their wonderful visitors with open arms; with a humanity that reflects disgrace on the maritime villages of Europe, where a shipwrecked fellow-creature, and fellow-countryman, has been destroyed for the sake of plundering his vessel. In other islands discovered by our circumnavigators, we find, that no kindness could mitigate the ferocity of the rude child of nature. The hospitality of barbarians, like all virtues that proceed not from principle, but from humour and accidental causes, is of little value. A clearer light than the light of nature is necessary to give a steady operation to the feelings of humanity.<sup>240</sup>

As one might expect, Omai was the center of much of the comment and discussion. Everything he said and did was of interest to the public, and the periodicals were not slow to record his activities for their readers. Omai was presented to the king;<sup>241</sup> Omai, recently recovered from smallpox, dined with the Royal Society at the Mitre tavern;<sup>242</sup> Omai dined at Baron Dimsdale's and charmed the company with his ease and politeness.<sup>243</sup> Fanny Burney's diary contains a vivid account of his gracious manners and his attempt to amuse a group of ladies and gentlemen by singing a Tahitian song for them.<sup>244</sup> Friends wrote each other amusing stories of his difficulties with the English language.<sup>245</sup> Boswell recorded that Johnson in 1776 spent an evening with Omai and found little of the savage in him, although characteristically he attributed Omai's gentility to the excellent company in which he had moved while in England.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>240</sup>"On hospitality, and the civilities of common life," *ibid.*, XLII, 194.

<sup>241</sup>Scot's magazine, XXXVI (1774), 388.

<sup>242</sup>Gentleman's magazine, XLIV (1774), 388. Cf. Scot's magazine, XXXVI (1774), 442-43.

<sup>243</sup>London magazine, XLIII (1774), 363-64. Cf. Annual register, XVII (1774), 61-63.

<sup>244</sup>Frances Burney, Early diary (London, 1889), II, 133-34. This account was written in 1775. See also for another reference to Omai's manners and accomplishments, *ibid* (1774), I, 322-26.

<sup>245</sup>See Walpole's Letters, January 28, 1776, and Cumberland letters, October 10, 1774.

<sup>246</sup>Boswell's life of Johnson, III, 28.

Gradually, too, a note of pity and indignation crept into the comments as it became clear that Omai was to be returned to his country essentially unimproved--or even, some feared, debased --by his contact with a Christian and civilized country. Edward Wortley-Montague, writing to a friend in 1775, expressed his pity for Omai's situation.

I pity poor Omai. He seems to me to be in the situation of a happy handsome country lass, decoyed to London by fine baubles and gaiety, courted and adored till known to all, and become common; then neglected and reduced, and, by dis-habit, unable to return to her first life of labour and sobriety, and consequently miserable.<sup>247</sup>

A similar pity inspired part of a letter to the Gentleman's magazine on the cruelties attending voyages of discovery:

I might add to all the cruelties of discovery that of transporting a simple barbarian to a christian and civilized country, to debase him into a spectacle and a mac-caroni, and to invigorate the seeds of corrupted nature by a course of improved debauchery, and then to send him back, if he survives the contagion of English vices, to revenge himself on his enemies, and die possessed by seven spirits more wicked than the first.<sup>248</sup>

All of these references, however, serve chiefly as indications of the temper of the times. They show no profound primitivistic or antiprimitivistic tendencies. They merely reveal, in their variety, and, indeed, in their casual and fragmentary character, the extent to which the South Sea Islanders had gripped the popular imagination. In the midst of such interest, and with a wealth of information at hand in the voyage accounts, it would indeed have been strange if writers had not seized the theme as an excellent vehicle for their purposes.

Some of the literature which arose out of the South Sea material merely used the background of names and places which had suddenly become very popular. There are, for example, two works which used the interest in giants aroused by Byron's account of

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<sup>247</sup> John Nichols, Literary anecdotes . . . (London, 1812), IV, 648, footnote.

<sup>248</sup> XLV (1775), 132. Cf. ibid., p. 166, a French officer's account of Bougainville's savage, Aotourou, who is said to have been improved by his visit to Paris. Whereas formerly he was free, gay, and inclined to libertinism, he is now reserved, polite, and well bred.



the Patagonians. One, attributed by the Monthly review to Horace Walpole,<sup>249</sup> is called An account of the giants lately discovered; in a letter to a friend in the country.<sup>250</sup> The account ridicules the public's credulity in regard to giants and discusses Byron's discovery. More interesting is the fantastic narrative, The hairy giants, purporting to have been written in Dutch by Henry Schooten in 1669-71, and translated by P. M. Gent in 1766 because of the recently aroused interest in "giants and new-discovered islands."<sup>251</sup> The story of the Portuguese, Vasques de Pagna, who was shipwrecked on an island near Le Maire Straits, suffered many hardships, and finally married the giant daughter of the king of the island, is diverting, but has little to interest the historian of primitivism. The only material of interest is the characterization of the giants as very chaste and temperate<sup>252</sup> and therefore long lived and of extraordinary stature;<sup>253</sup> and the antiprimitivistic urge of de Pagna to plant religion "amongst these miserably deluded People."<sup>254</sup>

Another amusing use of the South Sea locale is the anonymous satire, Travels of Hildebrand Bowman, Esquire . . . .,<sup>255</sup> published in 1778. Bowman, the narrator, introduces himself as one of the "Adventure's" crew who had miraculously escaped the fate his companion had met at the hands of New Zealand cannibals. After several days of hiding, he had set out across New Zealand, visiting in turn the Taupinierans, a mole-like people who could see only at night; the Olfactarians, blessed with a remarkable sense of smell; the Auditantines, equally gifted in hearing; the Bonhommicans, a civilized, but simple, good people, possessed of a sixth sense--the sense of conscience; and, finally the Luxo-voluptans, a nation ruined by excessive wealth and luxury.

But while Bowman cleverly used a popular background and

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<sup>249</sup>XXXV (1766), 471

<sup>250</sup>In The repository (London, 1777), I, 103-20.

<sup>251</sup>(London, 1766), Introduction, p. [1]. For a review of the narrative, see Critical review, XXII (1766), 397-98.

<sup>252</sup>The hairy giants (London, 1766), p. 18.

<sup>253</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>254</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>255</sup>(London, 1778.)

placed his mythical nations in the little known country of New Zealand, the South Seas as described in the voyage accounts are not an essential part of his satire. A few references here and there, it is true, give the narrative an air of verisimilitude. The travels are, for example, dedicated to Joseph Banks and Daniel Charles Solander because they would be "the best judges of the veracity of some part of them"; and because Bowman's friend Omai was indebted to their friendship and protection.<sup>256</sup> The dedication also contains an allusion to the often suggested delight Banks and Solander found in the South Sea ladies, and compares the charms of the favorite Tahitians with those of New Zealanders. "The inhabitants of a great part of New-Zealand, are certainly much less civilized than those of Otaheite and the other Paphian Isles; but had you been fortunate enough to have fallen in with the Auditantine coast, and could have conversed with the natives, I make no doubt but the fair Shepherdesses of that country, would have rivalled your favourite charmers, with this advantage, they scorn all pilfering, but that of hearts."<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, Bowman used a considerable number of the actual facts of the "Adventure's" voyage up to the New Zealand incident; the date of sailing, some of the places visited, the taking of Omai on board, and the arrival at New Zealand.<sup>258</sup>

There are, too, allusions to points discussed in the various South Sea voyage accounts, or arising from them. Bowman comments, for example, upon cannibalism. Many civilized nations, he reflects, think devouring one's own species so detestable that they believe abhorrence of the practice "an innate principle."<sup>259</sup> But, considering the wide difference in men's manners and ways of thinking, he concludes, "There was no such thing [as an innate principle]; but education and habit was all in all; and had I been born in that part of New Zealand, I most certainly should have been a cannibal."<sup>260</sup> He also speculates upon the existence of a southern continent, reviewing past attempts to discover it;<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>256</sup>Ibid., p. [iii].

<sup>257</sup>Ibid., p. iv.

<sup>258</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-14. Bowman says (p. 10), that he will give only a short abstract of the voyage, and refers the reader to Cook's account for full information.

<sup>259</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.

<sup>260</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>261</sup>Ibid., pp. 123-25, 208.

and in the end visiting it, for it is there the kingdom of Luxo-volupto is located.

Into his narrative he introduced as well topics which were being discussed in the light, in part of discoveries in the South Seas, and in part of exploration in other regions of the world. An amusing instance is the question whether there are men with tails. Bowman found his Taupinierans had such appendages, a fact which he felt would give a "singular pleasure" to a "learned judge in the northern part of this island," who had "been sneered at by some smatterers in knowledge" because he believed such men existed.<sup>262</sup>

More interesting to the student of primitivism is Bowman's attempt to represent various stages in man's progress from brute to a highly civilized state, and, in fact, to a further point when luxury brings deterioration. His Taupinierans are very close to brutes, reminding one in some particulars of the New Holland natives. They were stupid, nasty, naked animals with a language scarcely distinguishable from the grunts of animals.<sup>263</sup> They lived in caves,<sup>264</sup> and subsisted on fish, which they ate raw.<sup>265</sup> Marriage was contracted by mutual consent and as easily dissolved;<sup>266</sup> chastity was not regarded as a virtue.<sup>267</sup> They knew only paternal government in each family;<sup>268</sup> and their religion consisted of a "kind of veneration for the moon."<sup>269</sup>

The Olfactarians were in the next stage--that of hunters.<sup>270</sup> These people and those of succeeding stages have no close prototypes in any of the islanders described in the voyages. It is at this point, indeed, that Bowman began to enter into the realm of pure fancy. He followed the progress in civilization through the Auditantines, who represent the shepherd stage,<sup>271</sup> to

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., pp. 44, 49, 50-51, 53.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., pp. 44, 47.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> For the characterization of these people see ibid., pp. 83-97.

<sup>271</sup> See ibid., pp. 126-48.



the Bonhommicans, clearly the ideal state, civilized, but still simple and good, uncorrupted by luxury.<sup>272</sup>

In the last nation visited, the Luxo-voluptans, Bowman presented a people deteriorating because of excessive luxury.<sup>273</sup> In the characterization of this people, Bowman satirized England's vices, for it is clear, as the Monthly review remarked, that "the author depicts, as plainly as he can--indeed too plainly and tritely--the present manners of our own dear country, under the semblance of this part of the Terra Australis."<sup>274</sup> The list is a familiar one in the satires of the time: tea-drinking;<sup>275</sup> the gout<sup>276</sup> caused by overindulgence and quack medicines;<sup>277</sup> the dissipation of women;<sup>278</sup> gaming;<sup>279</sup> bad government;<sup>280</sup> the theatre;<sup>281</sup> the American situation;<sup>282</sup> masks and routs;<sup>283</sup> lawyers;<sup>284</sup> and the Church.<sup>285</sup>

It must be observed, however, that while Bowman used his South Sea background much more extensively than did the authors of An account of the giants lately discovered . . . and The hairy giants, yet the force of his satire is actually independent of it. His ideal people, the Bonhommicans, are a far cry even from the admired Tahitians. They had a much more highly developed government with a Queen, ministers, and two Houses, the Lurgows or House of Lords, and Burgows, or House of the People.<sup>286</sup> They were guided in most of their actions by a sixth sense--the sense of conscience,<sup>287</sup> which they carefully strengthened by means of special education.<sup>288</sup> They had simple, but strict laws governing marriage: polygamy was not allowed, nor was divorce easy to

<sup>272</sup> See ibid., pp. 179-245.

<sup>273</sup> See ibid., pp. 256-353.

<sup>274</sup> LIX (1778), 410.

<sup>275</sup> Travels of Hildebrand Bowman . . ., p. 257.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp. 259-60.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., pp. 265-76.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., pp. 278, 300-02.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., pp. 278-79.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., pp. 282-84.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., pp. 290-94.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., pp. 305-09.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., pp. 320-24.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., pp. 346-53.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., pp. 241-43.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., pp. 214-19.

obtain.<sup>289</sup> In short, this nation, in contrast to which England was satirized, was not one found in the South Seas, nor resembling even remotely one found there, but was, rather, a figment of the author's imagination.

These and other uses<sup>290</sup> of South Sea material as background need, therefore, concern us no further. We may dismiss, too, with scant consideration, a "poetical" description of the islands discovered by Byron in the "Dolphin."<sup>291</sup> Purporting to have been written by a common sailor on the "Dolphin," it is merely a jogging literal account of the ship's progress from island to island. The description of Tahiti is typical. It is a "beauteous isle," where the sailors find "rich fruits, pigs, fowls, and most salubrious roots." The natives are more polished than other savage Indians, the girls "kind in all respects." They live "as sense directs," thoughtless of the future. Nature tills the lands and the natives are content with what she yields for they covet neither gold nor silver, the "common source of strife." And so to the next island.

Of far more interest are the poems and prose works published between 1773 and 1776 which center about Tahiti, Omai, and Oberea. Many of these pick up the obvious theme--Tahiti, the Island of Love. But the writers of these works must not be supposed to be apostles of either primitivism or antiprimitivism. They show no serious desire to praise the freedom of Tahitians from a strict moral code, nor are they concerned with rebuking it. The setting was popular; the material would find readers; it could be treated in mock-heroic vein--and so they used it. Of this type is the anonymous burlesque poem An epistle from Oberea, Queen of Otaheite, to Joseph Banks, Esq.,<sup>292</sup> written in 1773. The love-

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., pp. 224-25.

<sup>290</sup> See, for example, the tale "The gentleman and the basket-maker," Moral and entertaining tales (London, 1767), II, 363-69; and Edward Lovibond, "To the same. With Anson's voyage," in Robert Anderson, Works of the British poets (London, 1795), XI, 590. The former uses the Solomon Isles as a background for a story in no way important to primitivism; the latter finds his Kitty's mind fairer than Tinian or any of the isles in "peaceful Ocean's arms."

<sup>291</sup> See Scot's magazine, XXX (1768), 432-33.

<sup>292</sup> In The new foundling hospital for wits (London, 1786), V, 237-49. Halkett and Laing attribute the poem to John Scott

sick Oberea, endeavoring to persuade Banks to return to her, recalls the scenes of their happiness, reminds him of the many proofs of her love, and incidentally describes most of the sensual scenes related in Hawkesworth's account.<sup>293</sup> Indeed, in a note to the poem, the author says he had intended to suppress many of these passages, but since Hawkesworth's "very luscious descriptions have been considered rather as sallies of his prurient imagination, than the transactions of real life, he thought it a piece of justice due to that great man to authenticate his narrative."<sup>294</sup>

A second letter from Oberea, Queen of Otaheite, to Joseph Banks, Esq., published the following year,<sup>295</sup> was thought by the Monthly review to be a product of the same pen as the first, from which it seems to have differed little in material.<sup>296</sup>

Still another poem having, in part at least, a similar appeal, is An epistle, moral and philosophical, from an officer at Otaheite to Lady Gr----r.<sup>297</sup> The London magazine, reviewing the poem, called it a "poetical paraphrase of some indecent passages in Hawkesworth's edition of Banks's Voyage to the South Seas," and added that these passages "would have been much better concealed than again exposed to public view."<sup>298</sup>

Another group of poems used the situations centered about Oberea and Omai as a basis for satire of England's vices. To this group belongs a reply to the first letter from Oberea to

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(later called John Waring), a major in the East India Company's service. For review of the poem, see Monthly review, XLIX (1774), 503-04; and Critical review, XXXVII (1774), 62-65.

<sup>293</sup> See, for example, ibid., p. 240 (Banks discovers Obadee in Oberea's bed); p. 241 (Oberea dances); p. 244 (Tahitian maiden visits English ship); p. 245 (the "rites" of Venus).

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. 245, footnote. <sup>295</sup> (London, 1774.)

<sup>296</sup> LI (1774), 394. I have been unable to examine a copy of this poem and have had to rely on the short notice in the Monthly review for an idea of its contents.

<sup>297</sup> (London, 1774.)

<sup>298</sup> XLIII (1774), 608. The reviewer also quotes a short apostrophe to Liberty which he feels is the best part of the poem. The full significance of these lines cannot be determined without an examination of the whole poem. Unfortunately, I have been unable to secure a copy of it.



Banks. An epistle from Mr. Banks, voyager, monster-hunter, and amoroso, to Oberea, Queen of Otaheite<sup>299</sup> is, as the title page announces, "enriched with the finest Passages of the Queen's Letter to Mr. Banks." Indeed the author, one A. B. C. Esquire--Second Professor of Otaheite and of every other unknown tongue--used the simple device of answering line for line, situation for situation, the material of the earlier poem. Banks admits the truth of the various scenes of happiness Oberea had mentioned in her endeavor to persuade her hero to return;<sup>300</sup> he acknowledges the proofs she had given him of her love;<sup>301</sup> and he pledges in turn his undying love, with the hope that he may return to the island to be "the fond support of OTAHEITE'S THRONE!"<sup>302</sup> But the poem is more than a series of answering lines. Interspersed throughout, are the author's comments upon England's follies.

Oberea is not censured for her former conquest, nor for her recalling it to Banks. Her attitude is, instead, contrasted with that of an English lady. Did she but live in England, she would not talk of meeting her love in "glades" or "coverts," but would carry on her affairs openly at Court!

Ah! didst thou dwell on these politer shores,  
Where dukes are cuckolds, maids of honour whores,  
Of plants explor'd thou wouldst disdain to boast,  
And live, and love, the universal toast;  
No more to glades or coverts wouldst repair,  
But meet thy love at Court, and press him there.<sup>303</sup>

In fact, in all matters pertaining to love and in particular to the relationship of the Tahitians with men from more highly civilized countries, it is the latter who are rebuked for their conduct rather than the former. Banks thus blames himself for his actions:

All hail! sweet Oberea, queen of charms,  
Whom oft I've clasp'd within my wanton arms!  
Desire was mutual, but the fault was mine;  
For you, fond souls, who dwell beneath the line,

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<sup>299</sup>(London, 1773.)

<sup>300</sup>See ibid., ll. 12-13, 24, 52-65, 70-79, 130-34, 180-88.

<sup>301</sup>See ibid., ll. 16, 26-27, 42-50, 120-22.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid., ll. 200-18.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid., ll. 18-23.

In mutual dalliance hold perpetual play,  
The golden age repeating ev'ry day.  
What's vice in us, in you is virtue clear,  
Untaught in guilt, you cannot know to fear.<sup>304</sup>

Similarly, he is ashamed of the actions and attitudes of his companions.

Oh! how the mem'ry pains my aching thought!  
The gallant sons of Britain's warlike land,  
In curious crouds around the beauty stand,  
While, as she turns her painted bum to view,  
With fronts unblushing, in the public stew,  
They search each crevice with a curious eye,  
To find exotics--where they never lie.  
O shame! were we, great George, thy gallant crew,  
And had we--damn it--nothing else to do,  
But turn thy great design to filthy farce,  
And search for wonders on an Indian's a--?<sup>305</sup>

Upon the actions of another civilized people, the French, who have brought venereal diseases among the Tahitians, he echoes Oberea's curse:

Help me to curse those too, whose deeds approve  
Themselves unworthy of thy country's love.  
Whose sordid souls could basely plant disease,  
Where all was joy, and liberty, and ease.<sup>306</sup>

But, although Tahitian simplicity and freedom shone in contrast with the actions of more highly civilized men, the author expressed no wish to introduce their standards among the English. Rather, he feared the consequences of the spreading of stories of the Tahitians by means of Hawkesworth's account. He pictured Hawkesworth as having deserted virtue, to which he had long been devoted, and for gold, selling his soul to vice.<sup>307</sup> The Account he saw as a factor undermining the morals of England:

But then to print our tale! O curse the thought!  
Curse those who sold,--a blush for those who bought.  
Fine tales for misses!--charming table-talk!  
Delightful too in each meandering walk,  
Through Britain's ample plains!--The lustful 'squire  
With ease may quench his unsubdu'd desire;--  
One page of Hawkesworth, in the cool retreat,  
Fires the bright maid with more than mortal heat;  
She sinks at once into the lover's arms,  
Nor deems it vice to prostitute her charms;

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 11. 120-27.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 11. 135-45.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 11. 160-63.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 11. 98-110.

"I'll do," cries she, "what Queen's have done before;"  
And sinks, from principle, a common whore.<sup>308</sup>

The difference in the attitude of the English and the Tahitians toward love is the basis of another satiric poem, George Colman's Epilogue to the new tragedy of King Henry the Second, or the fall of Rosamond.<sup>309</sup> In the character of Oberea, Colman pointed out the apparent differences in the two attitudes, then slyly suggested that except superficially English ladies were not very different from Tahitians, and ended by showing the evils arising from the inconsistency of the English attitude and practice.

GREAT and fair ladies! Lords gallant and mighty!  
Behold a female--fresh from Otaheite.  
Stretch to the southern ocean your idea,  
And view in me the princess Oberea.  
Full three long hours I've sat, with smother'd rage,  
To hear the nonsense of your tragic stage;  
To see a queen majestically swagger,  
A bowl in this hand, and in this a dagger;  
To stab or poison (cruel inclination);  
A maid who gave a husband consolation.

Ah! ladies! no such queen at Otaheite;  
Love there has roses, without thorns to fright ye:  
Frolick our days, and, to complete our joy,  
A coterie's form'd; 'tis call'd the Arreoy;  
Where love is free and general as the air,  
And ev'ry beau gallants with ev'ry fair!  
No ceremonies bind--no rule controuls,  
But love, the only tyrant of our souls!

But pleasure's foreign to these northern climes,  
And love, I hear, unknown in these dull times:  
Never was maiden in these days caught tripping;  
Never was wife on pleasure's ice found slipping;  
True to their lords, to gallantry ne'er prone,  
Divorces are so rare, the name's scarce known.

Yet, in our southern air--at least I'm told--  
Nor French nor Englishmen were quit so cold;  
And if your poet of to-night say true,  
Love formerly warm'd British ladies too;  
And ladies of old times perhaps may plead,  
That modern ladies are the self-same breed,

There is a place, I'm told, called Doctors Commons,  
Whence husbands issue to false wives dread summons;  
For each pretends--an all sufficient elf!  
To keep a lady to his precious self.  
Yet man, proud man, from Oberea know,  
That female follies on your follies grow;

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 11. 146-57.

<sup>309</sup> In Town and country, VI (1774), 49. The Epilogue is reprinted in A collection and selection of English prologues and epilogues (London, 1779), IV, 179-80.

And all your hopes of constancy are vain  
If marriage binds not in a mutual chain.  
If in cold sheets ye leave poor Nell to sleep,  
And some fair rose in Covent-Garden keep:  
Think of the ills that wait domestic strife,  
The heaviest care of all the cares of life--  
A tempting mistress and an angry wife!  
For you, ye fair, whom conscious virtue arms,  
And with her graces heightens beauty's charms,  
Hear a frail sister on your pity call,  
And save fair Rosamond a second fall.<sup>310</sup>

The moral laxity of English ladies is the theme of still another satire two years later--Omlah's farewell; inscribed to the ladies of London.<sup>311</sup> The novelty of Omai's nationality has attracted much attention to him, the author states in his Preface, particularly from the women of quality. As a result, much scandal has arisen, "illiberal insinuations" which the author hesitates to believe, although he knows "philosophy cannot reconcile the depravity of female inclinations."<sup>312</sup> In spite of this noble hesitancy, the poem is largely a series of farewells and thanks to the ladies who have been "kind" to Omai during his visit. Lady C\*\*\*\*\*, "beauteous B\*\*\*\*\*,", "lovely T\*\*\*\*\*,", and other "asterisked" ladies are toasted by the gallant savage for their beauty and their condescension.<sup>313</sup> One, singled out for particular mention, has promised to go with him to Tahiti,<sup>314</sup> and he prays to the Christian God that she may fulfill her promise:

Thou Christian God--for thou art call'd more kind,  
Thou rul'st the thunder--and direct'st the wind!  
O hear a poor untutor'd Indian's vow,  
And make her stoop to one thou'st made so low;<sup>315</sup>

His God, however, and the God of his island, is Love, and to this deity he addresses his principal supplication, that he may remain in England with the fair:

I boast no Lights from a superior Heav'n,  
Or wond'rous Lore by Education giv'n:  
Untutor'd, wild, unletter'd, I proclaim  
Myself as Indian--not the slave of Fame;  
The slave of Love--no other God I own,  
No other God is to OMLAH known.  
. . . . .

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<sup>310</sup>Town and country, VI (1774), 49.      <sup>311</sup>(London, 1776.)

<sup>312</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-111.      <sup>313</sup>Ibid., 11. 75-98, 110-14.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid., 11. 53-56.      <sup>315</sup>Ibid., 11. 77-80.



O on Omiah deign one courteous smile!  
Nor snatch him thus from all that's good and fair,  
But make the slave of love your watchful care!  
Here let me run the golden sand of life<sup>316</sup>

At the end of his apostrophes, Omai turns to laud his patron, Lord Sandwich, to whom he owes so much, and the ladies of his household, who have been most "kind":

Back, back the sails--'tis gratitude commands,  
To bow to S\*\*\*\*\* ere I quit these lands.  
Hail gallant Peer, the Neptune of this day,  
Illumin'd too by a coelestial Ray:  
May'st thou be ravish'd while she sweetly sings,  
And VIRTUE shade thee with her silver wings;  
May'st thou with HONOUR long direct the fleet,  
And CUPID'S kettle drums with rapture beat!  
To thee I owe my morals and my grace,  
Thou great example of the human race.  
To thy chaste roof my last adieus I pay  
To gentle M\*\*\*\*\* and gentler W\*\*\*.  
May love and music o'er your souls preside,  
And mutual pleasures flow in high spring tide.  
Long may the Navy feel the gentle sway,  
Of gallant M\*\*\*\*\* and lovely W\*\*\*.<sup>317</sup>

In the Preface to the poem in addition to a slight sketch of Omai's history and abilities--which represent him as of low descent, dull mind, but docile disposition<sup>318</sup>--the author expresses indignation over the kind of training the savage has received in England. It would have been more benevolent if "instead of dressing him out in a bag and sword, and leading him forth to all public spectacles," the English had instructed him in useful things, particularly how to deal with venereal diseases lately introduced among those "innocent mortals in a simple state of nature."<sup>319</sup>

Omai's education is also a chief point of attack in Lord John Townshend's satire Omiah.<sup>320</sup> The poem, addressed to the prostitute Charlotte Hayes, opens with the plan to get Charlotte and her "girls" to petition that Omai be sent back to Tahiti.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>316</sup>Ibid., 11. 23-45.

<sup>317</sup>Ibid., 11. 109-24. In the Preface, p. 111, the author hints at particular attentions which Omiah received from the Sandwich household.

<sup>318</sup>Ibid., p. [1]-11.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>320</sup>"Ode XXVI," Bell's Fugitive poetry (London, 1810), XVI, 113-16. I cannot find the date of the poem, but its context indicates that it was written while Omai was still in London.

<sup>321</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

Then follows a description of what Omai's reception in Tahiti will be and what he will tell his admiring audience of England. The description reveals the superficiality of Omiah's education, for he prates of the court, ladies, asses, apes, Sadlers Wells, masquerades, and the theatre.<sup>322</sup>

The political situation in regard to America is also satirized here and there throughout the poem,<sup>323</sup> which ends with a plan to give up the American colonies, make Omai a Viceroy and add Tahiti to the Crown:

My Lord applauds OMIAH'S skill,  
Erects a kingdom at his will,  
Then gives the king this nice toy;  
Resigns an Isle, and Boston town,  
Joins Otaheité to the Crown  
And makes OMIAH VICEROY!<sup>324</sup>

It should not be overlooked, however, that while this group of satires used Tahitians as a basis for attacking English vices, it does not, at the same time, reflect any genuine admiration for Tahitian life and standards of conduct. Nor do Oberea and Omai appear as "noble savages." The emphasis of the poems is consistently upon English folly rather than Tahitian superiority. In this respect they contrast with that most comprehensive in scope of all the satires of the 70's, An historic epistle from Omiah to the Queen of Otaheite; being his remarks on the English nation.<sup>325</sup> Using the familiar device of a man from a simple society describing the customs of a strange country, the author touches upon a wide range of subjects, and where comparison is possible, the superiority of the Tahitians is made clear. Omai, too, is not the credulous, silly savage of the other satires, but an astute and well-informed critic. The world he describes to his queen he characterizes at the outset as one "of prejudice," ruled by terror, bred of folly, and "rear'd in Fashion's schools."<sup>326</sup> At random he selects elements from the confusion to portray for Oberea this curious nation, the English.<sup>327</sup>

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>323</sup> See ibid., p. 116.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> (London, 1775.)

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., ll. 5-6. Cf. ibid., ll. 7-22.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., ll. 34-36.

Wealth, and the train of imaginary wants it engenders, is the first object of his criticism. Europe, with all her wealth, he points out, is less happy than he who wants little, whose joys are self created and directed:

Can Europe boast, with all her pilfer'd wealth,  
A larger share of happiness, or health?  
What then avail her thousand arts to gain  
The stores of every land, and every main:  
Whilst we, whom love's most grateful joys enthrall,  
Profess one art--to live without them all.  
By us instructed, would but Britons see,  
That he who dares resolve is truly free;  
And whilst his fortune limits his desires,  
The smallest pittance yields what need requires;  
That hence not bare existence is possess'd,  
But who wants nothing lives compleatly blest;  
The mind unfetter'd from her ample stores,  
Joys self-created, self-directed pours;<sup>328</sup>

From this basic error spring many evils. In turn, Omai depicts the state of religion, the constant wars, the complicated legal system, the futility of scientific studies, the declining arts, the false code of morals, the corrupt government, and finally the trivial pursuits which his patrons present for his entertainment and instruction.

English religion<sup>329</sup> is characterized by Omai as "overgrown." Headed by luxury-loving bishops who are inspired by revelation, it "calmly damns" those realms who know nothing of "what happen'd here two thousand years ago." No matter how good those men may be who have been guided only by reason's pure light, they can have no hope of heaven. The public worship of the English consists chiefly in telling the Creator "what he ought to do." In what contrast is the attitude of the Tahitian!<sup>330</sup> He believes his god to know what is best for him and consequently his worship consists of praise and thanks.

Since he also believes that a god must "look with pleasure on a world of joys," from his religion spring social virtues--man is brother to man.<sup>331</sup> The English, however, are constantly at war; they have, indeed, built up a complicated system of

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<sup>328</sup>Ibid., ll. 41-54.

<sup>329</sup>See ibid., ll. 69-106 for characterization of religion.

<sup>330</sup>See ibid., ll. 107-20.      <sup>331</sup>Ibid., ll. 119-22.

honours and distinctions about this occupation, and yet in the end they merely have what they started with--peace!<sup>332</sup> The Tahitians are simple, concludes Omai, but not so simple as to follow such a course:

We Otaheiteans, simple as we are,  
Wade not to peace through all the storms of war;  
Nor take a road so strangely round about,  
Just to arrive at where we first set out.<sup>333</sup>

Equally perplexing is the English legal system. Instead of being ruled like the Tahitians "on nature's simple plan," by their "plain code of . . . thou shalt do no wrong,"<sup>334</sup> the English have laws on laws and all the evils arising from such complexity.<sup>335</sup>

Tahiti has nothing to compare with the subjects of scientific investigation which Omai next describes,<sup>336</sup> but his opinion of the importance of such studies is clear from his comment upon the discovery (after ten year's search) of the size of a filbert maggot:

Though ign'rance think, that since this globe has run  
So many a stated circle round the sun,  
So many a year has held compact and fair,  
Unblest with knowledge of this insect rare,  
It might perchance, had it not yet been found,  
Have held together still, and still gone round.<sup>337</sup>

His description of the state of the arts in England is again without comparison in Tahiti. He praises the advance of music and painting, as represented by Handel and Reynolds,<sup>338</sup> but sees genius of dramatic and non-dramatic writing neglected by a "thankless age."<sup>339</sup>

With his discussion of the English code of morals, Omai once more claims the superiority of Tahiti. Struck by the appearance of one of the court ladies, he had approached her as he might have one of Oberea's ladies--only to be met with blushes, titters,

<sup>332</sup> Ibid., ll. 123-80.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., ll. 181-84.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid., ll. 185, 188.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid., ll. 186-230.

<sup>336</sup> See ibid., ll. 231-326. The subjects range from maggots to tails on men.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., ll. 279-84.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., ll. 461-500.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., ll. 327-460.



offended looks, as though he had made "some strange or rude request."<sup>340</sup> Unable to understand the situation, he inquired into it and learned of the "comic" idea of virtue which perversely keeps the English ladies from doing what they desire and leads to the falsehood which governs their conduct:

. . . . for midst these plains,  
O'er all the sex a comic virtue reigns;  
Hence contradictions all their acts inspire,  
Still most avoiding what they most desire.  
Beauteous in vain, to no one purpose fair,  
And render'd wretched by instructive care;  
Curst with refinement, cramp'd by senseless rules;  
Through prudence, useless; and through wisdom, fools;  
Studious to hide, or smother e'er they blaze,  
The honest flames which youth and beauty raise;  
Hence springs that falsehood which their conduct guides,  
Hence that reserve which o'er the will presides;<sup>341</sup>

This idea of virtue is not only ridiculous, but also--as Omai points out--meaningless, for it is built upon desire for fame. Transported to Tahiti, English ladies, still desiring fame, would vie with the Tahitians in actions exactly the reverse of their present ones.

Virtue thus built is but an empty name,  
A bubble buoyant on the breath of fame;  
Here wealth, and honours chastity await,  
The sex's morals are the modes of state;  
Transport these virtuous dames to our blest shore,  
Still love of fame will prompt them as before;  
. . . . .  
No passion there pent rankling in the breast,  
Then will they strive but to enjoy them best;  
And seek new methods to acquire renown,  
Suiting our tastes, to gratify their own.<sup>342</sup>

Clearly the English conduct is, in Omai's opinion, "unnatural" and meaningless.

Equally incomprehensible are the affairs of state;<sup>343</sup> moved by trivialities, buried in speeches and debates, beguiled by visionary schemes. The country cries out for a "Utopian minister," who concerned only with his country's good "should swear allegiance to the rights of man,"<sup>344</sup> and give England an honest reign.

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<sup>340</sup>Ibid., 11. 517-28.

<sup>341</sup>Ibid., 11. 533-44.

<sup>342</sup>Ibid., 11. 553-64.

<sup>343</sup>See ibid., 11. 570-618.

<sup>344</sup>Ibid., 1. 614.

Quickly Omai then reviews the scenes of his education under Solander's and Banks's guidance;<sup>345</sup> plays, museums, anti-quarian societies, Royal Society meetings, and country villas. Of all he is weary; most earnestly does he desire to return to the joys and common sense of Tahiti. His expression of this desire forms a strongly primitivistic conclusion to the poem:

Sick of these motley scenes, might I once more,  
In peace return to Otaheite's shore,  
How might I there with rational delight,  
Their faults and merits, unreserv'd recite;  
Well pleas'd to hear our aged sires debate,  
On the vile morals of a polisht state.  
How vain is learning, and how senseless art,  
United tending to pervert the heart;  
Callous to all the finer strokes which Heav'n,  
To undeprav'd, untutor'd man has giv'n;  
Whose honest heart no sordid interest fires,  
No fashion sways, no prejudice inspires;  
Where nature only rules the lib'ral mind,  
Unspoil'd by art, by falsehood unrefin'd;  
She feels his wants, and taught by her to live,  
He feels that comfort, riches cannot give.

Might I, blest thought! those plains again review,  
Again the paths of grateful joy pursue;  
To taste beneath some plantain's friendly shade,  
The warm endearments of a willing maid,  
Whose tender years the nice gradation prove,  
When infant fondness ripens into love;  
There claspt in transport to her beating breast,  
Each ardent wish without restraint possess;  
Profusely rich in all th' enraptur'd wealth,  
Which nature stores for innocence and health;  
Raptures repeated on delights should rise,  
Bloom o'er the cheeks, and languish in the eyes;  
Thus might we long indulge extatic flames,  
And leave chill virtue to European dames.

How could I too in generous floods impart,  
The candid friendship of a guileless heart!  
How join the chace o'er many a sultry plain,  
How bathe luxurious in the silver main!  
Or seek sedate the cool umbrageous grove,  
Where solitude and contemplation rove,  
There fondly straying o'er the sylvan scenes,  
Taste unrestrain'd what Freedom really means:  
And glow inspir'd with that enthusiast zeal,  
Which Britons talk of, Otaheiteans feel.<sup>346</sup>

In this poem, the element of complexity--whether it be in government, law, moral code, or religion--is the chief object of attack. In each instance, it is contrasted with Tahitian sim-

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<sup>345</sup>Ibid., ll. 619-92.

<sup>346</sup>Ibid., ll. 707-46.

plicity to the advantage of the latter. The poet, moreover, saw as a basis of this complexity, the false desires and imaginary wants engendered by luxury;<sup>347</sup> so that the poem is at base a presentation of the simplicity-luxury issue, with a focus upon England's vices resulting from luxury.

A few years later another anonymous poem, The injured islanders<sup>348</sup> discussed the same problem, but from a different angle. How had contact with Europeans affected the Tahitians? The question had arisen in the voyage accounts and the reviews,<sup>349</sup> and it appears again in this poem. Oberea describes the evils which have arisen among her people in the brief period of communication with civilized nations. The list is a familiar one in the primitivistic literature discussing the simplicity-luxury issue: introduction of exotic desires and strife, loss of social freedom, life, and happiness.<sup>350</sup> The author clearly feels, as a consequence of these evils, that Tahiti is in a much less desirable state than she was at her discovery.<sup>351</sup>

Yet this poem is not so thoroughly primitivistic in outlook as is An historic epistle from Omiah . . . . Throughout the earlier poem the superiority of the Tahitians had been insisted upon as it never is in the later one. The attitude of the author of The injured islanders may be compared with that of George Forster, to the account of whose voyage he refers in the Preface.<sup>352</sup> Both regretted that a simple happy people had been injured, yet neither stated that Tahitian life was to be preferred to that of a civilized man. Forster certainly made clear that he believed the opposite to be true,<sup>353</sup> while the author of The injured islanders disclaimed in his Preface all intention of making "any invidious Comparison between the Happiness of Natural

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<sup>347</sup> See ibid., ll. 37-69.

<sup>348</sup> (London, 1779.)

<sup>349</sup> See above, pp. 53, 65-66.

<sup>350</sup> For a discussion of the poem from this point of view, see Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the idea of progress (Baltimore, 1934), pp. 58-60.

<sup>351</sup> See, for example, ll. 76-84, 105-38. Cf. "Folly, a satire," Monthly review, LI (1774), 315-16. The author devotes a few lines to describing Tahiti's happiness at the time of her discovery and then paints a gloomy picture of the future when luxury with its attendant evils shall sway the island.

<sup>352</sup> p. [5].

<sup>353</sup> See above, pp. 66-67.

and Civilized Society."<sup>354</sup>

Quite different from all these poems in purpose and in treatment of Tahiti is another anonymous poem, Otaheite.<sup>355</sup> The author here was concerned neither with rebuking the vices of England, deploring the injuries to Tahiti, nor picturing the sensual delights of Tahitian life. In spite of the title, only eighty-two lines<sup>356</sup> of the total two hundred seventy-six deal with the island, and then it is used as an illustration of the mixture of good and evil in a people who have many natural advantages in climate and soil. The poet first reviews the delight of the returned wanderer as he recalls the hazards he has encountered,<sup>357</sup> and then comments upon the variety of inquiries which greet the wanderer's account.<sup>358</sup> He censures the voyage undertaken to secure luxuries,<sup>359</sup> and lauds that which assists in unfolding "Nature's mysterious Volume," and disclosing new "modes of human Life to Man."<sup>360</sup> It is the voyage which accomplishes the latter purposes that shows every region to contain good and evil.<sup>361</sup>

To illustrate this point the author selects three examples--the Laplander, the native of the Antarctic Circle, and the Tahitian. The first lives in a cheerless climate, but his life has few cares. In summer he hunts and provides himself with food for the long winter night of cheerful feasting about his "genial Board." He is happy.<sup>362</sup> The life of the native of the Antarctic Circle is in many respects more arduous than that of the Laplander. Imprisoned by ice, separated by seas from social commerce, oppressed by famine, his seems a cheerless life indeed. But he has no "false Desire," no "fancied Torture," no "invented Pain," and in that lies the good of his existence.<sup>363</sup>

In contrast to these peoples, the Tahitians seem at first glance to have no ills. The author's first characterization of this "Cyprus of the South, the Land of Love"<sup>364</sup> is all glowing

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<sup>354</sup>P. 8.

<sup>355</sup>(London, 1774.)

<sup>356</sup>Ll. 195-276.

<sup>357</sup>Ll. 1-26.

<sup>358</sup>Ll. 27-68.

<sup>359</sup>Ll. 69-100.

<sup>360</sup>Ll. 131-44.

<sup>361</sup>Ll. 145-48.

<sup>362</sup>Ll. 163-80.

<sup>363</sup>Ll. 181-94.

<sup>364</sup>L. 196.



and contains most of the elements found in descriptions of the Golden Age:

Here, ceaseless, the returning Seasons wear  
Spring's verdant Robe, and smile throughout the Year;  
Refreshing Zephyrs cool the noon-tide Ray,  
And Plantane Groves impervious Shades display.  
The gen'rous Soil exacts no Tiller's Aid  
To turn the Glebe and watch the infant Blade;  
Nature their vegetable Bread supplies,  
And high in Air luxuriant Harvests rise.  
No annual Toil the foodful Plants demand,  
But unrenew'd to rising Ages stand;  
From Sire to Son the long Succession trace,  
And lavish forth their Gifts from Race to Race.  
Beneath their Shade the gentle Tribes repose;  
Each bending Branch their frugal Feast bestows;  
For them the Cocoa yields its milky Flood,  
To slake their Thirst, and feed their temp'rate Blood;  
No ruddy Nectar their pure Bev'rage stains,  
Foams in their Bowl and swells their kindling Veins.

Their Ev'ning Hours successive Sports prolong,  
The wanton Dance, the Love-inspiring Song.  
Impetuous Wishes no Concealment know,  
As the Heart prompts, the melting Numbers flow:  
Each OBEREA feels the lawless Flame,  
Nor checks Desires she does not blush to name.  
No boding Presage haunts them through the Night;  
No Cares revive with early Dawn of Light:  
Each happy Day glides thoughtless as the last,  
Unknown the future, unrecall'd the past.  
Should momentary Clouds, with envious Shade,  
Blot the gay Scene, and bid its Colours fade;  
As the next Hour a Gleam of Joy supplies,  
Swift o'er their Minds the passing Sunshine flies;  
No more the Tear of transient Sorrow flows,  
Ceas'd are the Lover's Pangs, the Orphans's Woes.  
Thus the fleet Moments wing their easy Way;  
A Dream their Being, and their Life a Day.<sup>365</sup>

The land seems entirely a Paradise. But as Lapland and the Antarctic Circle had their bright sides, so Tahiti has its dark aspect. If the Tahitians do not know the pains of toil, they are also unaware of some of its rewards:

Unknown those Wants that prompt th' inventive Mind  
And banish nerveless Sloth from Human-kind.<sup>366</sup>

Nor is evil unknown in this place where there should be Arcadian innocence and a revival of the Age of Gold. The Arreoy Society encourages murder of children and devotion to a sensual existence, unrestrained by social ties or virtue.

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<sup>365</sup>Ll. 197-232.

<sup>366</sup>Ll. 237-38.

Can cruel Passions these calm Seats infest,  
 And stifle Pity in a Parent's Breast?  
 Does here MEDEA draw the vengeful Blade,  
 And stain with filial Gore the blushing Shade;  
 Here, where Arcadia should its scenes unfold,  
 And past'ral Love revive an Age of Gold!  
 Ah! see in vain the little Suppliant plead  
 With silent Eloquence to check the Deed;  
 He smiles unconscious on th' uplifted Knife,  
 And courts the Hand that's arm'd against his Life.  
 Not his last Sighs the Mother's Bosom move;  
 She dooms his Death, her Sacrifice to Love;  
 Impatient hastes her am'rous Vows to plight,  
 And seals with Infant Blood the barb'rous Rite.  
 Reclin'd upon her Lover's panting Breast,  
 See in his Arms the beauteous Murd'ress prest!  
 No keen Remorse the wanton Trance destroys,  
 No thrilling Terrors damp their guilty Joys;  
 Nor Ties of social Life their Crimes reclaim,  
 Nor rigid Justice awes, nor virtuous Fame.<sup>367</sup>

Then follows the antiprimitivistic conclusion--how great the triumph of that nation which could correct the vices of these people.

On Minds which thus untaught thus darkling stray,  
 To pour the radiant Beams of heav'nly Day;  
 To point where Nature the great Outline draws,  
 Where Truth reveal'd gives Sanction to her Laws;  
 To bid th' intemp'rate Reign of Sense expire,  
 And quench th' unholy Flame of loose Desire;  
 Teach them their Being's Date, its Use and End,  
 And to immortal Life their Hopes extend,  
 How great the Triumph!<sup>368</sup>

Seen in its position in the entire poem, this treatment of Tahiti is far from being the primitivistic one it has been considered.<sup>369</sup> If the author admired some aspects of Tahitian life, he certainly deplored others. The characterization in its mixture of good and bad really differs little from that found in the voyage accounts. The same elements are praised, the same condemned.

In spite of all the attention to Tahiti, only one writer of the period (so far as I have been able to discover) took as his theme the absurdity of introducing admired aspects of Tahitian life into England. He considered the subject in an essay which he called a "Rhapsody" On the advantages which Great-Britain may

<sup>367</sup>Ll. 239-58.

<sup>368</sup>Ll. 259-67.

<sup>369</sup>See C. B. Tinker, Nature's simple plan (Princeton, 1922), pp. 9-11 where the poem is discussed as strongly primitivistic.

derive from the discoveries of travellers in the reign of his present Majesty.<sup>370</sup> The Tahitians, he says, do without money. What an advantage this would be to England--they would be independent of countries in which gold and silver abound; there would be no more need to adjust the standard of coinage, and no counterfeits!<sup>371</sup> The Tahitians also have no horses. The utility of this he points out by suggesting that if all the horses were slain, corn would be saved and high prices on the grain thus relieved. Mounting the dragoons on bulls instead of horses would serve a two-fold purpose: the enemy would learn the force of "John Bull," and the Americans would be terrified. Another important result of killing the horses would be the end of horse-racing.<sup>372</sup> Finally, he considers the Tahitian custom of murdering children. This, he says, would be excellent for England since it would relieve the poor rates and make life merrier for the young. Moreover, if to this custom were added New Zealand cannibalism Swift's plan for helping the poor in Ireland would be realized.<sup>373</sup>

This humorous essay adds a final note to the variety of uses of the South Sea Islands which this flurry of literature between 1774 and 1779 reveals. They had been used as a vague locale for stories, as a humorously licentious theme, as a vehicle for satire, and as a convenient setting for presentations of the simplicity-luxury issue. These usages, moreover, show the primitivist, the antiprimitivist, the realist, and many shades between. Those aspects of Tahitian life which were praised--with some degree of primitivistic longing--were their happiness, arising from few and easily satisfied wants; their easy existence free from the necessity of toiling for food; the absence of a complicated and corrupt government; and their attitude toward love. In contrast, the last of these elements, with all that it entailed in the Arcey Society, was also the source of the most severe criticism of the Islanders.

In this brief period between Byron's voyage in 1767 and Cook's third voyage to the South Seas in 1776-80, much had happened of importance in the history of primitivism. The newly

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<sup>370</sup> London magazine, XLIV (1775), 74-76.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., pp. 75-76.

discovered islands had stirred the popular imagination as none of the earlier discoveries had. Tahiti had assumed a place of special importance. Because of the motives for the voyages--interest in discovery stimulated not primarily by trade but by a desire to promote a knowledge of the world and of man--and because of the character of many of those who wrote the accounts of these voyages, we find no longer fairly barren narratives, but accounts filled with details of daily occurrences, scientific observations, and philosophic speculations. This wealth of information, easily accessible, plus the presence of Omai, stimulated the use of the Islanders as a literary theme, with the variety and scope which we have just noted. Interest was great when Cook set forth for the third time.

In the voyages from that time to 1798 when the first missionary ship was sent to the South Seas, again many changes occurred. With increased knowledge of the Tahitians and the other favorites of the 70's came in some respects a changed attitude. With every additional year of European contact, furthermore, the Islanders themselves changed. And, as discovery proceeded, other islanders vied with the old favorites for supremacy. The change was a gradual one but none the less perceptible.









